



# **LIFE AND TIMES OF BAHADUR SHAH (1707-1712)**

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BY

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## **ABSTRACT**

It has been frequently stated that the Mughal monarchy ran into a deep crisis after the death of the last great emperor, Aurangzeb in 1707. The crisis was thought to have found its expression in the succession of even 'inferior', weak emperors who disgraced the public esteem of the ruling house. The lack of an indisputable order of succession not only split the power of the dynastic family and divided the Mughal nobility among themselves, but the frequent struggles for the throne in the early eighteenth century plunged the entire society into war causing permanent political conflict and long term devastation of the Imperial finances and the economy as a whole.

Indeed, the war of succession between Aurangzeb's three sons lasted almost three years. This work (Life of Times of Bahadur Shah 1707-12) proposes that the egotistical claims to power of 'unfit' candidates and the unsound motives of their 'greedy' and 'evil minded' supporters subverted the idea of an unchallengeable imperial authority in the person of the emperor, and the loss of his authority eroded to the same degree the unity of the Empire. Before the accession of Muhammad Shah in 1719 four wars of succession has been fought which, according to Zahiruddin Mallick, "proved a serious drain on the financial resources of the government. Every war entailed great diversion of resources to

military uses, putting a severe strain upon the already depleted treasury. The disaster of battle and plunder told heavily on all classes. Problems of post-war adjustments deepened the economic crisis which had for long gripped the Empire”.

It is quite clear that wars following the death of Aurangzeb temporarily gave rise to intense conflicts and increased tensions within the realm; any short-term power vacuum at the centre immediately developed into factional struggles among the nobility. The first two chapters of the present work analyse the above mentioned problem being faced by the empire. The third chapter deals with the Rajput problem inherited by Bahadur Shah and how far he was successful in setting right the wrongs done by Aurangzeb.

Chapter four narrates the Deccan story where the proverbial ‘Spanish Ulcer’ was eating into the vitals of Mughal Empire. After fixing Kam Bakhsh, Bahadur Shah was in a position to solve the Maratha problem. However, so many vested interest had grown in Deccan that Bahadur Shah had to somehow get out of it and moved towards North India where another monster in the form of Banda Singh Bahadur was raising its head.

Chapter five deals with the above problem and highlights how the rivalry and divided counsels within the nobility led to the escape of Banda Bahadur.

Chapter six concentrates on the socio-cultural scene during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and concludes that the century witnessed the climax of an endless process of absorption, assimilation and adjustment of diverse elements and tendencies that had gone centuries giving shape and complexion to the cultural tradition of India.

The last chapter with the heading 'conclusion' apart from taking a overview of the five years of Bahadur Shah's reign also looks into the benevolent and reckless character of Bahadur Shah which resulted in him being referred to as "Shah-i-bikhabr. Last but not the least the *jagirdari* crisis which increased manifold owing to reckless grant of jagir by Bahadur shah has been also evaluated.

In this thesis we have tried to see the trajectory of trial and error being adopted by Bahadur Shah and have come to conclusion that he might have succeeded in evolving lasting solutions to some of the problems if he had lived longer.

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## CERTIFICATE

Certified that **Ms. Neelam Afaq** worked under my supervision on the topic "***Life and Times of Bahadur Shah (1707-1712)***". This thesis is the original work of the candidate and I find it suitable for submission for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
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NEELAM AFAQ



## *Chapter 1*

# *Introduction*

## **CHAPTER – 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Mughal Empire, which had dazzled the contemporary world by its extensive territories, military might and cultural achievements showed unmistakable signs of decay towards the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Mughal emperors lost their power and glory and their empire shrank to a few square miles around Delhi towards the end of the century with Delhi itself being occupied by the British army in 1803. The unity and stability of the Empire has been shaken during the long and strong reign of Aurangzeb, yet in spite of his many harmful policies, the Mughal administration was still quite efficient and the Mughal army strong enough at the time of his death in 1707. Moreover, the Mughal dynasty still commanded respect in the country.

A sinister development in the later Mughal politics was the rise of powerful nobles who played the role of 'king makers'. Wars of succession were fought even in the heydays of the Mughal Empire but then the royal princes were the principal contestants supported by powerful mansabdars. In the later Mughal period the ambitious nobles became the real contenders for political power and the royal princes receded in the background. The powerful nobles and leaders of different

factions used the royal princes as pawn in their game and set up and removed royal princes from the throne to suit their interests.

Bahadur Shah became the Emperor due to the untiring efforts of a lesser known but dedicated and loyal noble Munim Khan who was rewarded with the *Wizarat* inspite of Aurangzeb's desire to retain Asad Khan. Thus Jahandar Shah became the emperor not by his own strength but because of the able generalship of Zulfiqar Khan, a leader of the Irani Party. Similarly, it were the Saiyid brothers who raised Farrukh Siyar to the throne in 1713 and pulled him down in 1719 when he ceased to serve their interests. Three puppet emperors, Rafi-ud-Darajat, Rafi-ud-daula and Mohammad Shah were raised to the throne by the Saiyids. The fall of Saiyid brothers in 1720 came not because they had lost confidence of the Emperor but was brought about more by the Turani faction under the leadership of Nizam-ul Mulk and Mohammad Amin Khan. And worst of all, these powerful parties were not political parties in the modern sense having different programmes for the welfare of the state but were factions looking for self-advancement, more often at the cost of the state and against the interests of the Mughal ruler.

William Irvine mentions the multiplicity of parties at the Mughal court. Among these four were prominent – The Turanis, the Iranis, the Afghans and the Hindustani. The first three were descendents of

foreigners from Central Asia, Iran and Afghanistan. Their number had greatly increased during the last twenty five years of Aurangzeb's reign when he waged incessant war in the Deccan. Descendants from these foreigners held important military and civil offices in India. Among these the Turani's from Trans-Oxiana and Afghans from Khurasan and Fars were mostly sunnis, while the Iranis from Persia were mostly undeclared Shias. In opposition to the Mughal or foreign party was the Indian born or Hindustani party. It mainly comprised Muslims born in India, many of whose ancestors though originally immigrants had settled in India for generations. This party got the support of the Rajput and the Jat chiefs and powerful Hindu landlords. The Hindus who filled almost all the subordinate offices naturally ranged on their side. However it will not be correct to assume that the political parties were based entirely on ethnic or religious groups. As has been rightly pointed out by Satish Chandra that "slogans of race and religion were used by individual nobles only to suit their convenience and that the actual groupings cut across ethnic and religious divisions."<sup>1</sup>

A principal characteristics of the history of the Mughal Empire in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was party or group politics. Its nature was, however, different from that of the personal groups centering round a particular

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1 . Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1701-1740*, pp. 257-58.

person under the early Mughals in India. During the time of the Great Mughals, personal considerations sometimes led ambitious and rebellious princes and nobles like Kamran, Mirza Hakim, Khusrau, Mahabat Khan and others to form a group or coterie with their supporters. But usually such attempts were nipped in the bud and did not envelop the entire court. In the time of Jahangir, however, the waters of the court were seriously troubled on account of the machinations of Nur Jahan Junta in the Khurram-Shahirya rivalry. Under Shahjahan, again, the see-saw of court politics pulsated with the dominance of Aurangzeb or Dara in imperial counsels particularly with regard to Golconda and Bijapur. But in such moves the nobility as such played a secondary role because the emperors were too strong.

Towards the end of Aurangzeb's reign, two groups of nobles, Irani and Turani were already raising their heads and seeking to come to the forefront in the Mughal court. After his death the controlling and unifying machinery went out of order with the practical abeyance of monarchy. So, the importance of parties or groups grew out of all proportions. It now came to be moulded more by the character of the nobles than by that of the rulers. In fact the emperors were largely responsible for this state of affairs because they were weak. Candidates were put on the throne by the self-centred nobles who wanted that the Emperor should reign and they

should rule. They could neither govern themselves nor did they possess the power to judge the right persons who could become worthy and honest officers and ministers.

As has been mentioned earlier, this party politics can hardly be compared with party government in a purely democratic state. Unlike the modern political parties there was no common principle of work or firm party obligations in the Mughal court parties. It was the natural instinct of self-preservation which tempted the nobles to form such groups and keep the governmental machinery under themselves, and strengthen their own respective groups with the provincial governor, military commander and obedient feudal nobles and courtiers. What gave strength and cohesion to these groups was the family bond while ethnic identity added to the common interests of the group as symbolized by a recognized leader. What held the members of each group together were the traditional emotional attachment to certain cultural and political institutions.<sup>2</sup>

It is, therefore, necessary to have a knowledge of the character and composition of the political parties and their role in shaping the destinies of the state.

Broadly speaking the nobles of the later Mughal Court were divided down to 1720 into three principal groups –

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2. Zahiruddin Mallick, *The Reign of Mohammad Shah*, pp. 72-73.

- (i) The Hindustani party included those born in India or had settled for long here e.g. many Afghan nobles, the Saiyids of Barha, as well as Khan-i-Dauran whose family came from Badakshan. The nobles of this group largely depended on the support of their Hindu friends. The Afghans were not prominent in Indian politics down to 1748, notwithstanding their numerical strength in the army.
- (ii) The so called 'foreign' nobles collectively called Mughals were subdivided into two groups according to the country of their origin. One of them, the Turani's came from Turan or Traxiana, and other parts of central Asia. They were of Turkish origin and were mostly Sunnis. They enjoyed much influence and power as fellow countrymen of the ruling race, the Mughal, and formed a large proportion of the army. The Turani leaders were highly distinguished both as generals and civil administrators.
- (iii) The other foreign group was of the Irani nobles, coming mostly from Persia and Khurasan and they are mainly Shias. The Iranis excelled in civil administration, especially in revenue and secretariat work. But being Shias they were in a minority and their influence in the state was less except when their leaders were in power. At first sight it would appear that race and religion constituted the basis of rivalry. But this division was not wholly

exclusive. Even in one group there were members of the other groups. Hence this differentiation was not entirely based on religion or racial differences.

The leading figures in the Irani group were Alamgiri nobles, Asad Khan and his son Zulfiqar Khan, holding the ranks 7000 and 6,000 respectively by the end of 1707. They were also highly influential. Zulfiqar was also successful general. He was supported by Daud Khan Panni, Rao Dalpat Rao Budh Singh of Bundi, Rao Ram Singh Hara of Kota, all distinguished soldiers. This Irani group was very powerful and influential but it was not a racial group. Both Asad and Zulfiqar were Persian, born in India. It was 'a family cum personal' group bound by family ties and personal relations of supporters. There was no clearly defined programme of this group, except that Zulfiqar was interested in *Wizarat* of Deccan, even in Shahu and his negotiating with the Marathas. Again he was favourably disposed towards the Hindu and his close association with the Bundela and Hada Rajputs was very significant. The group operated with a fair degree of cohesion which gave it effectiveness. After the fall of this Irani family 1713 no other Irani noble rose to such high rank till the end of Mohammad Shah's reign in 1748.

The famous Turani group which rose to prominence at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and continued to hold power in varying degree till the



middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century was headed by Ghazi-ud-Din Khan Firoz Jung.<sup>3</sup> Like the group of Asad Khan mentioned earlier this was also a family group, well knitted together by ties of kinship and marriage and by common allegiance to the Mughal crown. But it was larger stronger more exclusive and consequently more cohesive. Other members of this family were Chin Qulich Khan<sup>4</sup>, Mohammad Amin Khan<sup>5</sup>, Abdus Samad Khan<sup>6</sup>. However, a serious setback of the Turanis was that the relation between Firuz Jung and Chin Qulich Khan was strained and Firuz Jung was blind. During the war of succession in the first two decades of 18<sup>th</sup> century the indifferent attitude of this group put them out of power and paved the way for the rise of Zulfiqar Khan and Abdullah Khan. During the war of succession after Aurangzeb's death, the Turanis held aloof from Azam and deserted Kam Bakhsh. They remained in the background in the time of Bahadur shah.

During the period 1707-13, covering the reigns of Bahadur Shah and Jahandar Shah, the Irani party was strong with Asad Khan *Vakil-i-Mutlaq* and Zulfiqar Khan as first *Mir Bakhshi* and then Wazir (1712-13). Zulfiqar initially joined Azam during the struggle with Bahadur Shah but deserted him due to his personal defects. He was favorably disposed

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3 . For details of his biography, see, *Maasir ul Umara* I, 872-879.

4 . Ibid, III, 837-48.

5 . Ibid, I, 346-350.

6 . Ibid., III, 69-74.

towards the Marathas securing the release of Shahu in 1707 and also towards the Hindus. He was also instrumental in the accession of Jahandar. As *Wazir* he tried to monopolise power in his own hands. But owing to the differences with Kokaltash, a foster brother of Jahandar, he did not exert himself against Farrukh Siyar in 1713, leading to the fall of Jahandar shah. From the accession of Farrukh Siyar in 1713 to the first year of Muhammad Shah's reign (1720) the Hindustani party remained in power under the Saiyid brothers. Without attempting to monopolise power the Hindustani Saiyids sought the cooperation of the Alamgiri nobles. But their pro-Hindu, pro-Maratha policy, lack of administrative experience and their friction with the emperor led to a reaction against them on the ground of their policy being anti-Islamic and anti-monarchical. Hence, they lost their ascendancy in 1720 as a result of the combination of the Iranis and Turanis.<sup>7</sup>

While explaining the phenomenon of the decadence of the Mughal power, Historians generally lay stress on the social and moral degeneration of the privileged few who grew indolent, self satisfied and indifferent in their duties. For instance Ahsan Ijad<sup>8</sup>, the author of the *Shahnama-i-Deccan* criticizes the character of the nobility and attempts to interrelate its decline with the break-up of political power. He burns

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7. Jagdish Narayan Sarkar, *A Study of the 18th century Indians*, pp. 28-29.

8. Ahsan ijad is the author of *Farrukh Siyarnama*, which deals exclusively with the political history of Farrukh Siyar.

with indignation at the corrupt and luxurious life of Aurangzeb's successors, factional rivalries among the nobles, and their cowardly behaviour in dealing with the enemies of the Mughal government. The age being one of political decline and economic distress, there runs a thread of gloom through the entire contemporary historical writings. The contemporary writers, who saw the empire passing into the turmoil of strife, and its vast structure ultimately breaking down before waves of insurgency and foreign invasions, did not hesitate to condemn the unwise policies of the emperors and their inefficient conduct of administration. They denounced the kings for their impolitic and inexpedient acts in regard to military operations and administration; even matters relating to their private life were subjected to severe criticism<sup>9</sup>, Bahadur Shah was blamed for his extreme munificence in lavishing gifts and privileges of office and power on undeserving persons.<sup>10</sup> Jahandar Shah was depicted as drunken profligate<sup>11</sup> while Farrukh Siyar was called a prisoner of indecision.<sup>12</sup> Muhammad Shah was accused for his indolence and intemperance which made him incapable of holding the self seeking nobles under control.<sup>13</sup> A number of *Ibrat Namahs* (Kamraj's, Mirza

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9. Zahiruddin Mallick's article in Mohibul hasan's edited *Historians of Medieval India*, p. 176.

10. Khafi Khan vol. II, 601-2, 627, *Ibratnama*, Kamraj, f.36a.

11. Nuruddin Faruqi, *Jahandarnama*, Aligarh Rotograph, ff, 36-38.

12. Mirza Mohammad, *Ibratnama*, Patna Ms 95-96.

13. Yahya Khan, *Tazkirat ul Mulk*, Aligarh Photograph f. 132b.

Mohammad's and Qasim Lahoris) were written in this period showing the political anarchy of this period.

Nevertheless, any act of insubordination on the part of the nobles was unbearable to the historians. They gave full vent to their indignation at the local leaders who made a bit to secure share, compatible with their might in profits the empire could offer.<sup>14</sup> In the struggle for supremacy between the centre and the provinces the historians are divided into two groups; some display enthusiastic partiality towards the Imperial centre, while others tend their support to the local chieftains and provincial governors. Historians like Qasim Aurangabadi, Mansa Ram, author of *Maasir-i-Nizami*, Yusuf Mohammad Khan, author of *Tarikh-i-Fathiyah*, and others who compiled their works in Deccan supported the Nizam ul Mulk in his conflict with the centre. But writers like Ashub, Rustam Ali, Shafi Warid, Mirza Muhammad held the imperialist point of view. It appears however that their loyalty was to the Mughal crown and not to one who wore it.

In an atmosphere filled with faction feuds, historians felt constrained to take sides and advocate the cause of their group leaders and patrons. As has been mentioned earlier the rise of parties at the court proved to be the undoing of Mughal empire. The background to the rise

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14 . *Mirat-i-Waridat*, 644-45.

of the parties at the court was the decline in the prestige of the monarchy as a result of Aurangzeb's failure to deal satisfactorily with the oppositional movements of the Marathas, Jats and Rajputs etc. The civil wars following the death of Aurangzeb further weakened the position of monarchy, especially as no competent monarch emerged successful from them. Simultaneously, the crisis of *jagirdari* system which had been steadily worsening, lead to inordinate delays in the allotment of *jagirs*, and even a jagir was allotted there was sometime considerable gap between its paper and real income. One reason for the growth of parties at the court was the scramble for the best and most easily manageable *jagirs*, the lions share going to the more powerful political group. The struggle for *wizarat* was to some extent a struggle between such groups. Each group consisted of powerful individuals and their supporters who tried to win a leading position in the affairs of the state by securing control of the leading offices at the court, particularly the offices of the *wazir* and *mir bakhshi*. Simultaneously an attempt was made to dominate the emperor and to restrict his freedom of intercourse with rival nobles in order to guard against the intrigue. Hence, they also tried to secure control of the posts which gave them access to the emperor.

The struggle for *wizarat* was not a struggle between the monarchy and the nobility as such, for the nobles had no common bond or interests.

In fact, one of the few points of agreement among them was regarding the divine right of the Timurids to rule. But it would be wrong to see in the struggle for *wizarat* merely a fight between rival groups of nobles for office and power. Zulfiqar Khan and the Saiyid Brothers who enjoyed a dominating position in the state for some time, attempted to use their power to institute policies and measures aimed at giving a new lease of life to the Mughal empire. These nobles did not seek exclusive power for themselves. But their pre-eminent position aroused the jealousy of some nobles who intrigued to remove them from office and power.

Lastly, the struggle for *wizarat* also involved a struggle over policies. This conflict touched some of the most vital issues that had faced the Mughal empire since its inception and particularly during the long reign of Aurangzeb. Thus, such questions as the attitude to be adopted towards the Rajput states and individual Rajput Rajas, the status of the Hindus and the levying of cesses like the *jizyah*, the policy to be followed towards the Marathas and such recalcitrant elements as the jats – all these issues were at the core of party politics. Basically, the question was whether the state ought to be based in the main on the Muslims, and rest on racist and religious foundations, or whether it should be broad-based on the support of both Muslims and Hindus, being essentially secular in spirit. Even in the time of Bahadur Shah, there was a trend

towards a softer attitude towards the Rajputs and the Jats, and a certain laxity was allowed in the collection of the jizyah. During Jahandar Shah's reign, Zulfiqar Khan abolished the jizyah and promised high mansabs and posts to the Rajput rajas. He had earlier concluded a pact with Shahu for the payment to him of the *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* of the Deccan. The policy of Bahadur Shah, Munim Khan and Zulfiqar Khan was taken up by the Saiyid brothers. They once again attempted to broad base the state on the support of the Hindus as well as the Muslims, and moved in the direction of a composite ruling class consisting of all sections of Muslims and of the Rajputs as well as the Marathas – even granting concession to the Jat leaders.

In the forthcoming chapters, we will be analyzing the policies adopted by Bahadur Shah to deal with the various problems being faced by the Empire, and how far did he manage to overcome them.

## *Chapter 2*

# *War of Succession, Coronation and Appointments*



## CHAPTER – 2

### WAR OF SUCCESSION, CORONATION AND APPOINTMENTS

The second son of Aurangzeb, Muhammad Muazzam was born at Burhanpur on 14 October 1643. His mother, and the mother of the eldest son, Muhammad Sultan, was Nawab Bai, daughter of Rajah Raju, rajah of Rajauri in Kashmir. After the death of his elder brother, Sultan Muhammad, Muhammad Muazzam, became heir apparent. Muazzam, in the early part of his father's reign, from 1644, was actively employed in the Dakhin against the Mahratta and the kingdom of Bijapur. In 1683-84 he commanded an army in the Konkan without much success and then served under his father at the siege of Golkonda. During the siege of Golkonda, some communications passed between Abul Hasan the ruler of that place and the Prince. These messages referred to a proposed intercession for peace to be made through Muazzam. Aurangzeb assumed that they were of a disloyal nature and at once placed his son under arrest in 1687.<sup>1</sup>

Muhammad Muazzam was kept a prisoner for nearly seven years during the whole of which time he behaved with the utmost discretion, showing throughout the most complete outward humility and resignation.

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1 . William Irvine, *Later Mughals*, pp. 1-5.

In 1695 Muhammad Muazzam (styled in his father's life time Shah Alam) was released and sent as governor to Akbarabad. He passed one year in Agra, proceeding thence to Lahore, Multan and Uch. On the death of Amir Khan, the subahdar of Kabul, he assumed the government of that province. For eight years the hot season was spent in Kabul and the cold weather at Jalalabad or Peshawar or in marches through the country. In November 1706, he pitched his camp at Jamrud twelve miles west of Peshwar and he was still there when he heard first of the illness and then of the death of his father at Ahmadnagar in the Deccan.<sup>2</sup>

Aurangzeb's principal anxiety during his last days was how to avert the outbreak of a murderous civil war among his sons, like the one which had broken out on his father's illness and had brought him to the throne. He was particularly anxious on account of his youngest and favourite, Kam Bakhsh.

Alamgir's second surviving son, Azam Shah had for many years looked on himself as his father's destined successor. He used the opportunity offered by his brother's long removal from power to increase his own authority and influence. In 1701 he was sent to administer that province in person. There he acquired considerable wealth and increased the numbers of his armed force. In 1706 his father reluctantly permitted

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2. Jagjivandas, f. 37-51.

him to return to the imperial headquarters, the Prince's eldest son Bidar Bakht being transferred from Malwa to Ahmedabad as his father's deputy. It was not long before quarrels arose between Azam Shah and his younger brother Muhammad Kam Bakhsh. His jealousy was also aroused by the independent position and rumoured wealth of Prince Muhammad Azim-us Shan, second son of Muhammad Azam, who had been subahdar of Bengal and Bihar for some years. One of Alamgir's last acts was to recall this grandson from Azimabad, Patna, at the instigation of Muhammad Azam.<sup>3</sup>

Alamgir had felt that his end was approaching, and he foresaw that if his two sons Azam Shah and Kam Bakhsh were left together his death would be the signal for instant hostilities. The Mahrattas were at the time giving great trouble in the vicinity of the imperial camp, and any dispute among the claimants to the crown would provide them with an opportunity of which they would not be slow to avail themselves. Kam Bakhsh was therefore appointed to be subahdar of Bijapur and was directed to march to his destination with all possible expedition.<sup>4</sup>

Muhammad Azam was ordered to march to his *subah* of Malwa, and he left very much chagrined, as he claimed the entire Deccan for himself (*tamam Dakin az-ma-ast*).<sup>5</sup>

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3. *Masir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 442, 496, 512, 520; *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, ii, pp. 516, 518, 541, 546-7.

4. *Masir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 520; *Nuskha-i-Dilkusha*, 158a.

5. *Masir-i-Alamgiri*, 520; *Muntakhab-ut-Lubab*, ii, 547-8; *Nuskha-i-Dilkusha*, 158.

Haiderabad to Kam Bakhsh. It is possible that in sending Kam Bakhsh to take charge of Bijapur, Aurangzeb was also motivated by the desire of giving effect to this scheme, hoping that with the support of some of the leading nobles, Kam Bakhsh, who was the favourite of his old age, would be able to defend himself against his rivals. But perhaps Aurangzeb was concerned more with holding the balance even between his sons so that none of them might accuse him of favouritism in the same way as he had accused his father of favouritism towards Dara.<sup>6</sup> The lion's share including the city of Delhi was to go to the eldest Muazzam who would remain titular emperor of Hind, while to Azam's share fell six provinces, including Agra, the second city of the empire, and the old capital. Amir-ul umara, that is Asad Khan, is *Wazir*, is recommended as *Wazir*.<sup>7</sup> But Aurangzeb was not so naïve as to expect that his will would be accepted as a matter of course. Muazzam was already far away in Kabul. Azam, on learning of his father's illness, had come down from Ahmedabad, inspite of Aurangzeb's plaintive protest that his coming at this time reminded him of his own advance to Agra at the time of Shah Jahan's illness. The

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6 . Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics*, pp. 50-51.

7 . *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, ii, p. 549.

prince had, with a grotesque sense of humour, used the very words which Aurangzeb had then employed.

As soon as the Emperor had breathed his last, the Wazir, Asad Khan, known as Amir-ul umara, sent for all the nobles. He bound them by oaths to act in union while Sarbarah Khan the Kotwal or officer in charge of the camp police was sent out to preserve order. Meanwhile the Qazi-ul gazzat with other learned and holymen prepared the body for the tomb. Letters were sent in all haste to prince Azam Shah by Asad Khan and by the Prince's sister, Zinat un nisa, requesting him to return without a moment's delay. Azam hurried back and took possession of the royal effects. All the nobles who were present at the court, including the *Wazir*, Asad Khan, declared for him. Zulfiqar Khan the *mir bakshi*, who was on a roving mission to chase the Marathas, hurried back from the Tungbhadra Duab with Ram Singh Hara, Dalpat Bundela and Tarbiyat Khan *mir atish* and joined Azam near Aurangabad.<sup>8</sup>

After a few days of mourning a brief enthronement ceremony was held in which Azam was proclaimed the sovereign and Asad Khan confirmed as Wazir.

With the support of the most powerful nobles in the empire, and with the royal stores, a park of artillery and the veterans of the Deccan

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8 . *Akhbarat*, Zulfiqar Khan joined on 2 April 1707.

wars at his disposal, Azam was popularly regarded as being in a very favourable position for winning the civil war. But his advantages were more apparent than real. Many of the high grandees were unwilling to face the hazards of a civil war and were half hearted in Azam's cause, or openly declined to accompany.<sup>9</sup>

Ghaziuddin Firoz Jung remained in Daulatabad and made no move to join Azam. Zulfiqar Khan proposed to Azam that he should march *via* Daulatabad in order to compel Firoz Jung to join him. But Azam was unwilling to leave the direct road to Agra, and gave a haughty answer that his opponent was not a Dara Shikoh, and his personal troops (*Wala sahis*) were sufficient to deal with him.<sup>10</sup> In reality Azam was greatly annoyed at the refusal of Firoz Jung and Chin Qulich Khan to march with him, but thought it discreet to dissimulate, and thinking that it was 'safer to leave Firoz Jung behind as a friend than as 'foe' conferred the title of *sipha salar* upon him, and made him the Governor of Aurangabad and the Viceroy of Deccan.<sup>11</sup>

Not only Firoz Jung and Chin Qulich Khan but even Asad Khan and Zulfiqar Khan were not keen to leave the Deccan and to accompany

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9. *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, p. 572.

10. *Maasir ul Umara*, iii, 877.

11. *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 572.

Azam Shah, and tried their best to persuade the latter to leave them in Deccan by pointing to the activities of the Marathas.

The half heartedness of these and other nobles is ascribed by Iradat Khan to the insane pride of Azam which made him despise the advice of others<sup>12</sup>, his *shiite* inclinations and his parsimoniousness in giving increments and promotions. But Iradat Khan's charges do not seem to be well founded. As another contemporary author, Khafi Khan, observes, in fact Azam had not the money to be liberal with.<sup>13</sup> The Deccan wars had been very costly. The Deccan was traditionally a deficit area, and because of Aurangzeb's reluctance to spend the hoarded treasures of Shah Jahan, the pay of the army was sometimes three years in arrears towards the end of his reign and the mainstay of the Emperor had come to be the revenues of Bengal. The little money that Azam found in the royal treasury went to meet the arrears of the salaries to the soldiers.<sup>14</sup>

Many of Azam's difficulties would have been solved if he could have reached and occupied Agra first, since it contained a good part of the hoarded treasure of Shah Jahan. But there was not a single person who doubted that, comparing the distance of Peshawar with difficulties in

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12. *Iradat*, 11-12.

13. *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 531, 583.

14. *Nadir-uz Zamani*, pp. 8-9.

the way of Azam Shah, Shah Alam would arrive before him.<sup>15</sup> Azam might have gained control of Agra if he had permitted his son, Bidar Bakht, who was the Governor of Ahmedabad to march on Agra. At first Azam gave permission to Bidar Bakht but old suspicions rekindled by jealousy led him to revoke his orders. It was hinted that Bidar Bakht, if he obtained the start, might on reaching Agra take possession of all the treasure and turn his arms against his father. Fresh orders were therefore issued to him. He was now ordered not to enlist men but to join his father at Gwalior. Bidar Bakht, although he lamented the evil advise his father had received, disbanded his troops and started to join his father. He reached Shahjahanpur in Malwa (April 1707). In this neighbourhood as that of Ujjain he waited one month and twenty days for the arrival of Azam Shah.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, the third son of Shah Alam, Azim-ush-Shan, who had been recalled from Bihar by Aurangzeb just before his death, reached Agra. The commandant of the Fort, Baqi Khan, who was the father-in-law of Bidar Bakht, refused to yield the fort till one of the contestants reached in person. Since the previous arrival of Shah Alam was a foregone conclusion, this practically secured Agra for him.

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15 . William Irvine, I, 19.

16 . *Ibaratnama*, Kamraj Bin Nain Singh, f. 84; *Nadir-uzZamani*, 367a.



And so the army plodded on northwards, encumbered with all the impediments of an imperial Mughal army on the march, complete with curtained elephants and purdah carts of the harem ladies, the huge and luxurious tents with their thousands of servants, slave girls, merchants, bankers, agent artisans and prostitutes, that were normal to every imperial excursion, be it a campaign in the Deccan or Rajputana or a leisurely progress to the pleasure resort of Kashmir. The restless Bidar who was leading the van had to repeatedly stop to enable the rest of the army to catch up.

During the last years of his father's lifetime Muhammad Muazzam, in whom there must have been great power of dissimulation, had given out that if Azam Shah claimed the throne he would make no attempt to contend with him but would at once seek a refuge in Persian territory or elsewhere. But the truth was that he had made secret preparations in concert with Munim Khan, diwan of Kabul, to assert his claims without a moment's delay. Munim had secured the prince's confidence and had on his recommendations been made *naib subahdar* of Lahore. Here he worked busily to collect the means of war, and for a year had been in the field with an army beyond the Beas and even the Satlaj, on the pretext of a rebellion by Inayat Khan. Camels, Oxen to drag the cannon and other means of transport with boats for making bridges across the rivers had

been silently collected in readiness in the country between Lahor and Peshawar. Rao Budh Singh Hada of Bundi and Bijai Singh Kachhwaha, who had taken refuge with Bahadur Shah at Kabul were conciliated, and through them there were enlisted a large number of Rajputs' who joined the standard just about the time of Alamgir's death.<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile Muhammad Muazzam reached Peshawar with his two youngest sons. After a day's stay the Indus was crossed, by means of the boats collected by Munim Khan, a bridge which usually was made in two months being put together in two days. On reaching Pul-i-Shah Daulah, twelve *kos* north of Lahore, Muhammad Muazzam celebrated his accession and took the title of Bahadur Shah by which name henceforth we will refer to him.

Homage was paid by all the lords and great officials of the Punjab headed by Munim Khan. On 3 May 1707, crossing the Ravi by a bridge Bahadur Shah entered Lahore.<sup>18</sup> Delhi was reached on 1<sup>st</sup> June. On entering the city shrines were visited and alms distributed. After visits to the shrine of Khwaja Qutb-ud-Din and of Nizamuddin Auliya (surnamed Sultan ul mashaikh) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June the journey was resumed.<sup>19</sup> Even at this late stage Muazzam made an offer to Azam. He stood by his father's

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17. *Nadir-us Zamani*, 367 a.

18. *Muntakhab ul Lubab*, 573-75; *Nuskha-i-Dilkusha*, 164a.

19. *Muntakhab ul Lubab*, 576-577; *Nuskha-i-Dilkusha* 164a; *Tazkirat ul Muluk*, 112 b-113a.

will, he said, and was willing to increase Azam's position from four to six provinces, if that would satisfy him. In spite of this offer, Azam was still determined on war he suggested that the two should meet and decide the issue by single combat.

Azam laughed scornfully at his brother's offer which was conveyed to him through *Mir Karim*, a revered and respected faqir. The offer, he declared, was such as only a *Banya* (his favourite nickname for his elder brother) could make; only he could think that the sovereignty of an empire could be decided by trading subas. His elder brother, although a learned and well-read man seemed to have forgotten the verses in Shaikh Sadi Shirazi's *Gulistan* which every schoolboy knows "Ten poor men can sleep comfortably under one blanket while two kings cannot be contained within one kingdom". How could two swords be kept in one scabbard? Further, if a division was to be made, it should be an equal one. Was it fair to offer him four provinces, while Bahadur Shah kept fourteen for himself? Some assert that the only division he would accept was, as he said, that given in the lines

Az farsh-i-khana ta balab-i-bam az an-i-man

Az bam-i-khana ta ba sariya az an-i-tu

"My share is from the floor to the roof of the houses

Yours from roof up to firmament".

He ended by reciting in a loud voice with arms stretched forth and sleeves rolled up the line from the *Shah Nama*, “when tomorrow’s sun has arisen there will be, I and my mace, the battlefield and Afrasyab”.<sup>20</sup>

When Azam reached near Gwalior, he received the news of the occupation of Agra by his rival. Much agitated, he decided to leave the *wazir*, Asad Khan at Gwalior with the ladies and the unnecessary equipment and jewels and treasure, and to march on Agra at once.

So war it was going to be, and Azam had decided that the field of choice should be Samugarh, a field judged to be auspicious as it was here that Aurangzeb had routed Dara shikoh. Aurngzeb too, like Azam had come up from the Deccan, determined to seize the sovereignty of Hind.

Khafi Khan, the author of *Muntakhab-ut Lubab*, says that Azam attacked boldly without heeding the superior force of his brother, or deciding upon any clear plan of battle. He went boldly forth, as a fierce lion falls on a flock of sheep’. But such impetuous and improvised attacks could have only one outcome. The first clash took place quite by accident as Azam’s army was lumbering towards Samugarh, near the village of jajau. They were fated never to reach the auspicious field they were seeking.

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20 . *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, 585-87; *Ibaratnama*, 24a; *Maasir-ul Umara*, ii, 670; *Storia do Mogor*, iv, 400-6; *Bahadur shah nama*, 10; *Nadir-uz Zamani*, 369a.

Neither army was quite sure of the movements of the other and Muazzam had ordered his advance tents to be pitched in a grove 4 miles to the north of Jajau. Rustam Dul Khan, Mir Tuzak, who was in charge of the imperial camp and equipage was overseeing their erection when Azam's vanguard, commanded by Bidar Bakht, stumbled upon them.

The tents were set on fire and Rustam Dal Khan's small force scattered while the Mir Tuzak himself surrendered and was permitted to ride in the train of Azam. But Muazzam's van commanded by Azim us Shan was close at hand and while Bidar Bakht's band struck up the drums in honour of the supposed victory, it closed to engage them. For a time confusion reigned and the Jat auxiliaries of Muazzam started plundering what was left of the camp, Azim us Shan found himself hard pressed.

The forces of Azam were definitely inferior to those of Shah Alam. Azam had started with a force of 35,000 horse which had swelled to 50,000 horse besides infantry by the time he reached Gwalior.<sup>21</sup> Shah Alam's force is placed by some authorities at as high a figure as 150,000 horse, but it may have been less.<sup>22</sup> Apart from the advantages which numbers and an ample treasury conferred, Shah Alam had also been able to stiffen his forces with heavy guns taken from the fort of Agra. On the other hand, Azam had to leave most of his heavy artillery behind in the

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21 . *Muntakhab-ut Lubab*, 583.

22 . *Nuskha-i-Dilkasha*, 164a.

Deccan and at Gwalior in order to advance more quickly.<sup>23</sup> His army had also suffered greatly from the rigours of the march and the hot season.

Thus, by any reckoning, victory was beyond the grasp of Azam Shah. The battle of Jaju was essentially in the nature of a gamble on his part. He hoped to take the enemy by surprise and to strike a decisive blow before Shah Alam had time to consolidate his position. For this reason, perhaps, he did not formulate any plan of action.

As has been mentioned earlier, Azam gained an initial advantage in a brush with what he mistakenly thought was the main body of Shah Alam's force but was in reality, only the advance guard. As soon as the main force of Shah Alam joined battle, Azam's position deteriorated. Shah Alam's artillery played havoc in his army. Many prominent nobles, and prince Bidar Bakht and his brother, Wala Jah, were killed. Zulfiqar also received a slight wound. Perceiving that the day was lost and there was no hope of victory, he went up to Azam Shah and advised him to flee in order to live and fight another day.<sup>24</sup> But Azam, probably with the fate of Dara in his mind, refused to do so, and resolved to sell his life dearly. By this time there were only a few hundred horsemen left around Azam. The wind had died down and the day was drowning in a crimson sun. But with the sinking sun, Azam's life was also drawing to an end. Wounded

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23 . *Nuskha-i-Dilkasha*, 162a.

24 . *Muntakhab ul Lubab*, 596.

repeatedly and surrounded by a sea of hostile troops with only his faithful band around him he exclaimed despairingly: "it is not Shah Alam who fights against me; God himself has abandoned me and fortune has turned against me!"<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile Azam continued to fight with a small force of 300-400 horsemen around him, although Zulfiqar, accompanied by Hamid-ud-din Khan, went off to Gwalior, and his example was followed by many others, the end came when Azam was struck by an arrow. Rustam Dil cut off his head, and carried it to Shah Alam.

Zulfiqar Khan's refusal to stand by the side of his royal master till the end has been adversely commented upon by a number of contemporary observers, some of whom go so far as to make his flight the chief cause of Azam's defeat.<sup>26</sup> While this is certainly an exaggerated view, there can be little doubt that Zulfiqar Khan's conduct violated contemporary notions of loyalty and earned for Zulfiqar Khan the reputation of being 'ambitious' and 'unreliable'.

The next day at the Bagh Dahar Ara near Agra Muazzam (Bahadur Shah) held a formal durbar, and received congratulatory *nazars* and the homage of his officers. The four prince received new titles. The eldest Muizzuddin received the honorific of Jahandar shah and the governorship of Thattah and Multan his former charges, while Muhamamd Azim, now

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25 . Elliot and Dowson, vii, p. 399; *Storio do Mogor*, iv, p. 402.

26 . *Nuskha-i-Dulkasha*, f. 165.

transformed into Azim-ush Shan Bahadur was given his old charge of Bengal and Bihar. Rafi-ul-Qadr was exalted to Rafiush shan and received the charge of Kabul while Khujista Akhtar became Jahan Shah and received the province of Malwa.

Munim Khan could not attend the durbar on account of his wounds, but as promised he was formally proclaimed as the Wazir-ul Mulk with the rank of 7,000 and titles of Khan-i-khana Bahadur Zafar Jung. The emperor honoured him by visiting his tent to enquire about his condition. His two sons also received high mansabs.<sup>27</sup>

The policy of Bahadur Shah was throughout his reign one of conciliation. It is difficult how far he was influenced in this conduct by his Chief Minister Munim Khan. But from the first this spirit was shown. It was laid down that to have joined Azam Shah was not in itself to be treated as an offence. The emperor met any remonstrances by saying that if his own sons had been present in the Dakhin, they would have been forced, in order to save themselves, into adopting their uncle's cause.<sup>28</sup>

A few days later Asad Khan and other officers of the fallen prince came to tender their submission. Asad Khan had brought with him the emperor's sister Zinat us Nissa Begum and other ladies and family members of Aurangzeb's and Azam shah's families. Asad Khan laid

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27 . *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 598; *Nuskha-i-Dilkasha*, 167a.

28 . *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 600.



claim to the Wizarat but that had already been conferred on Munim Khan whose services to Bahadur Shah was beyond measure. Nevertheless, Bahadur Shah, anxious to conciliate as many of the nobles as possible and to surmount the problem revived the post of regent or Wakil-i-Mutlaq, and conferred it on Asad Khan. His son Zulfiqar Khan was given a rank of 7,000 and was allowed to deputize for his father and was confirmed in his old offices of Amir ul Umara and Bakhshi-ul Mamalik, that is, paymaster general of the army. He was however, a powerful and influential noble, not only by virtue of being his father's deputy but in his own right as the first bakhshi, the office being after the Wazir's, the next most important at court. In addition, he was given the viceroyalty of the Deccan provinces with Daud Khan Pan as his deputy. Similarly, offers of immunity and invitations to court were sent to Ghazi-ud-din Khan Bahadur Firoz Jang, his son, Chin Qulich Khan, the subedar of Aurangabad and his cousin, Muhammad Amin Khan Chin Bahadur.<sup>29</sup>

The division of authority in this way between a former Wazir and a new minister was not likely to endure. Munim Khan soon objected to the formalities which made him nominally, if not really, the subordinate of Asad Khan. The rules required that when Asad held his audiences as Wakil, the Chief Minister, Munim Khan, should appear before him and

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29 . *Tazkirat us Salatin-i-Chaghtai*, 15.

after making obeisance stand while the official documents were signed. This was considered by Munim Khan to be an indignity. The pre text was therefore found that Asad Khan, having arrived at a great age, should now retire to Delhi and rest from the fatigues undergone in the constant campaigns and marchings of the preceding reign. Zulfiqar Khan, remained at court as his deputy with charge of the Vakil's seal to the end of the reign: this seal was impressed after that of the Wazir upon all written orders and warrants of appointment in the military and civil departments, but in no way had Asad Khan any longer the least in the affairs of the realm.<sup>30</sup>

In the end the Principal offices in the state came to be thus distributed: as already stated the high office of *Wakil-i-Mutlaq* was held by Asad Khan, Alamgir's Wazir; Munim khan Khanan was *Wazir* or Prime Minister; Zulfiqar Khan Nusrat Jang son of Asad Khan, first *Bakhshi*, Mirza Shah Nawaz Khan Safawi, second *bakhshi* as before; Mahabat Khan, son of Munim Khan, third *Bakhshi*, Inayatullah Khan Kashmiri diwan of the Khalsa and tan; Hamid-ud-din Khan Alamgir Shahi, and Rustam Dil Khan, were the first and second Masters of the ceremonies (Mir Tuzuk).

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30 . *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 601.

The civil war was not over. There remained Kam Bakhsh, the favourite of his father, holding independent court at Hyderabad. But Bahadur Shah was in no hurry to deal with him. Kam Bakhsh could never be a threat to him, and had he acted with ordinary prudence his half brother might well have left him in undisturbed possession of his southern appanage. But Kam Bakhsh was neither a man of ordinary good sense nor of common prudence. The account of his rule, if such it could be called is like a horror story.

Aurangzeb had appointed Kam Bakhsh to the government of Bijapur and he had gone to assume charge a few weeks prior to his father's death, the news of which reached him while he was still on the march. On receiving the tidings, most of the Turanian Amirs in his army led by Muhammad Amin Khan deserted in *en bloc*. They realized that there was no future with a prince like Kam Bakhsh and that the great contest for the sovereignty of Hind would be between Azam and Muazzam. Furthermore, they had no desire to stagnate in provincial Bijapur where 'Mir Mallang' Ahsan Khan already held the premier position. As a consequence of this desertion, the strength of his army was greatly depleted and much of his baggage was looted.

In this weakened state Kam Bakhsh reached Bijapur where the qiladar, to his acute embarrassment, closed the gates and refused to admit

him. The subedar was Chin Qilich Khan, the son of Ghazi-ud-Din Firoz Jang, the blind governor of Berar. Chin Qilich Khan way away to Ahmadnagar but his nephew Syed Niyaz Khan was holding the fort and raised difficulties about handing over charge. Ahsan Khan opened negotiations and after several days Niyaz yielded and opened the gates.

Quite unaware, the prince had narrowly escaped being captured by Zulfiqar Khan. The latter was in the neighbourhood and having come to know of the weakened state of the prince's forces, toyed with the idea of taking him prisoner and making a present of him to Azam. There was ill feeling between him and the prince dating back to the siege of Gingee in the reign of Aurangzeb. But Rao Dalpat Bundela of Orchha, his faithful lieutenant, advised him against uncalled for interference in the quarrels of princes. Zulfiqar thus continued his march towards Ahmadnagar to join Azam, while Kam Bakhsh entered Bijapur and set about establishing a court.

### *Chapter 3*

## *Policy Towards Rajputs*

## CHAPTER – 3

### POLICY TOWARDS RAJPUTS

The rainy season was passed by the Emperor in his camp at Bagh Dahr Ara near Agra, where he was occupied in making the numerous appointments, usual, when a new sovereign ascends the throne. In this interval it was found that the affairs of Rajputana called most urgently for the Emperor's presence in person, and it was resolved to march by way of Amber and Ajmer to Jodhpur. A start was made on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1707.<sup>1</sup>

During the civil war, both Azam and Bahadur Shah had bid for Rajput support. Azam had granted to Ajit Singh and Jai Singh the titles of Maharaja and Mirza Raja, the ranks of 7,000/7,000, and the governorships of Gujarat and Malwa respectively. Jai Singh had joined Azam Shah in Malwa but deserted him during the battle of Jaju.<sup>2</sup> However, he received no favour from Bahadur Shah who had been joined by Viyai Singh, the younger brother of Jai Singh. Ajit Singh joined neither side, and took advantage of the civil war to expel the Mughal commander from Jodhpur. He did not attend the court or send the customary congratulations to Bahadur Shah on his accession to the throne. In Jodhpur he was said to be 'oppressing the musalmans, forbidding the

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1. *Tazkiratus Salatin-i-Chagtai*, 19.

2. *Ibratnama*, 56b.

killing of cows, preventing the summons to prayer, razing the mosques which had been built after the destruction of idol temples in the late reign, and repairing and building a new idol temples'. The Rana of Udiapur and Raja Jai Singh were said to be acting in close cooperation within him.<sup>3</sup>

Hence, a war to punish Ajit Singh to destroy this coalition was decided upon and on 9 October 1707, Mahrab Khan was appointed the *faujdar* of Jodhpur. The emperor himself set out for Rajputana marching by way of Amber and Ajmer.<sup>4</sup>

Rana Amar Singh of Udaipur averted the threatened blow by sending Bakht Singh his brother to Agra with a letter of congratulation, one hundred gold coins, one thousand rupees, two horses with gold mounted trappings, an elephant, nine swords and other production of his country.

As they drew near to Amber, the capital of Kachhwaha, Bahadur Shah directed that as there was a dispute for the throne between the two brothers, Jai Singh and Vijai Singh, the state should be annexed to the Emperor that the name of the town should be altered to Islamabad, and that a new *faujdar* should be sent there in person of Saiyid Ahmad Said

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3. *Muntakhab-ut Lubab*, 606.

4. *Bahadur Shah Nama*, 177; *Akhbarat*.

Khan Barha.<sup>5</sup> The army reached Amber about the 20 January 1708, and on a Friday the Emperor went in state to pray at a mosque situated in that town. Raja Jai Singh had deserted Azam Shah before the close of the battle of Jajau, and apparently had been now sometime in the imperial camp at Agra and on the march. The emperor camped in Amber for three days during which the town was deserted by inhabitants. The *mutsaddis* proceeded to confiscate the goods of Jai Singh, but these were returned to him soon after and the kingdom was conferred on Vijai Singh.<sup>6</sup>

The action taken by Bahadur Shah was not a sudden one. Soon after the battle of jaju, Jai Singh had been told that since there was a contention between him and his younger brother Vijai Singh, Amber would be taken into *Khalisah* and thereafter bestowed upon Vijai Singh. Even before leaving for Rajasthan towards the end of August 1707, the *Subahdar* and the *diwan* of Ajmer were ordered to take possession of Amber.

He was still on his way to Ajmer when two important reports were reached. First it was notified that on hearing of the Emperor's drawing near to Ajmer, Rana Amar Singh had fled in fright from Udaipur sending his family and property to a hiding place in the hills. The second report

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5. Later Mughals, i, 47-8; *Bahadur Shah Nama*, 317; According to *Akhbarat*, March 1708, the name of Amber was changed to Mominabad.

6. *Bahadur Shah Nama*, 254, 279, 288; *Ibratnama*, 56a.



came from the Dakhin, and it had reference to Muhammad Kam Bakhsh. He had issued coinage can caused *khutba* to be read in his own name. This was of course, a declaration of independence, and in spite of Bahadur Shah's love of peace, this was apparently a claim that he felt bound to resist. From this time he resolved as soon as he had dealt with Jodhpur to march into the Dakhin to suppress Kam Bakhsh.

When he had reacted the neighbourhood of Ajmer, Bahadur Shah announced that he intended to march to Jodhpur. On hearing this, Mukand Singh and Bakht Singh, the representatives of Ajit Singh then in attendance on the Emperor, offered to bring in the Rajah to make his submission. At this time it was learnt that when Mehrab Khan, *faujdar* of Jodhpur, reached within seven kos of Mairtha, he had been attacked by Rajah Ajit Singh. The Rajah was defeated and fled, and Mairtha was then occupied.

On the 12 February 1708 a *farman* was sent by messenger to Durgadas Rathor, but the advance continued. Three days afterwards when several marches had been completed, an answer arrived from Ajit Singh. It was not altogether unfavourable, but he professed to entertain grave doubts as to the Emperor's intentions. A written answer was sent off at once to Durgadas Rathor. The next day the Wazir's son, Khan Zaman

accompanied by Rajah Budh Singh Hada and Nejabat Khan, was dispatched to interview Rajah Ajit Singh at Jodhpur.<sup>7</sup>

On the 21 February 1708 Bahadur Shah reached the town of Mairtha. Ajit Singh came with Khan Zaman and was allotted quarters in the camp of Munim Khan, the Wazir. Next day the Rajah was presented and with his hand, tied together by a handkerchief, he made his obeisance, and offered one hundred gold coins and thousand Rupees.<sup>8</sup>

The difficulty with Jodhpur being thus to all appearance, satisfactorily dispersed of, the Emperor retraced his steps from Mairtha and returned to Ajmer. In other words the situation prevailing at the time of Aurangzeb's death was restored.

On 24 March 1708 after sixteen marches, Bahadur Shah arrived at Ajmer on his return from Mairtha. He visited the city mosque and said his prayers there and he also recited a short prayer (*fatihah*) at the shrine of Muinuddin Chishti. On the 2 April the march was resumed in the direction of Chittor and Ujjain. On the 12 April the camp was not far from Husainpur. On the 14 April Sultan Begi and others, six men in all brought in a communication from Rana Amar Singh with an offering of twenty seven gold coins. The next day the Wazir reported that the Rana had again made off into the hills, in terror of His Majesty's near

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7. Bahadur Shah Nama, 68.

8. Bahadur Shah Nama, 82, 95; Ibratnama, 37.

approach, nor would he agree to come in and do homage. The Emperor ruled that the matter of Kam Bakhsh was now more urgent. When, by God's aid, that business had been settled, he would undertake the punishment of that unbeliever i.e. the Rana.<sup>9</sup>

When the camp was at the town of Mandeshwar in the subah of Malwa, it was learnt that Maharajah Ajit Singh, Raja Jai Singh Kachhwaha and Durgadas Rathor, had taken to flight.<sup>10</sup>

The three malcontents headed for Udaipur where they entered into a pact with Rana Amar Singh. Some of the clauses of the agreement signed by the three front ranking chiefs of Rajasthan were to be the cause of much misery for their people, but the immediate effect of the alliance was a repudiation of imperial authority and the assertion of a determination to recover their lost independence. The pact entered between Akbar and the Rajputs, which was one of the fundamental basis of the Mughal Empire, seemed to be falling apart.

Perhaps, the real reason for Bahadur Shah keeping a hold on the cities and parganas of Jodhpur and Amber, and his even greater firmness with the Rajputs than Aurangzeb, was to demonstrate that he would maintain the general policies of Aurangzeb. In this way he may have

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9. *Bahadur Shahnama*, 84-94; *Nuskha-i-Dil Kasha*, 172a.

10. *Bahadur Shahnama*, 96-97; *Nuskha-i-Dilkasha*, 172b; *Nadir us Zamani*, 2376b.

wished to please and to win over the orthodox section, particularly the Alamgiri nobles, in his contest with Kam Bakhsh.

Bahadur Shah's action in Amber closely resembles that of Aurangzeb in Jodhpur, following the death of Jaswant Singh. His motives were probably similar, viz. a desire to gain greater control over Rajputana and the trade routes passing through it. However, it was hardly likely that Bahadur Shah would succeed where Aurangzeb had failed, and his action in Amber could only result in widening the breach with the Rajput rajas.

Some modern historians have charged Bahadur Shah with 'treachery' and alleged that Mihrab Khan was sent by 'stealth' to occupy Jodhpur and that Ajit Singh burned with rage when he heard of it'.<sup>11</sup>

However, Khafi Khan explicitly states that Ajit humbly agreed that Khan-i-zaman and *qazi-ul-quzzat*, Qazi Khan might come into Jodhpur to rebuild the mosques destroy the idol temples, enforce the provisions of the shariat about the summons to prayer and the killing of cows, to appoint magistrates, and to commission officers to collect *Jizyah*. The author adds, 'this "request" was accepted and the sins of Ajit Singh were pardoned, and official, and officials of justice like *qazis* and *muftis* as

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11 . Tod, ii, p. 905.

well as *imams* and *muezzins* were sent to Jodhpur and neighbouring towns.<sup>12</sup>

Thus it seems to be wrong to allege any breach of treaty by Bahadur Shah. But there can be little doubt that Ajit Singh was not reconciled to the loss of Jodhpur. According to the official history of the reign, Ajit Singh repeatedly petitioned for the restoration of Jodhpur, but because he harboured the intention of rebellion and disturbance in his heart, the Emperor, who comprehended all matters, did not grant his request.<sup>13</sup>

Due to this distrust of the Rajputs and in order to indicate imperial prestige, Bahadur Shah decided to keep hold of Jodhpur. Jizyah was also levied there.<sup>14</sup> Worse still, Ajit Singh and Jai Singh were kept in a state of semi-captivity in the imperial camp while the emperor marched to the South to deal with Kam Bakhsh. However, on 30 April 1708, when the royal camp arrived at Mahabaleshwar on the Narmada, the two rajas effected their escape. For the moment, Bahadur Shah deemed the matter of Kam Bakhsh more important, and refrained from ordering a pursuit.<sup>15</sup>

This, in effect, constituted a breakdown of the Rajput policy so far pursued by Bahadur Shah, apparently at the instance of munim Khan –

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12 . *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 606-7.

13 . *Bahadur Shah Nama*, 398.

14 . *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 606.

15 . *Mirat-i-Waridat*, 52; *Ibratnama*, 57a; *Nadiruz Zaman*, 32.

Mirza Muhammad, a contemporary writer sharply criticizes Munim Khan and denounces this policy as ill conceived. They (Ajit and Jai Singh) should have been given assurances and concessions he opines, 'But the Wazir, Munim Khan, remained oblivious of this. Rather, he advised his Majesty that they should be put off with sweet words and empty promises, while their countries were to be handed over to the charge of imperial officers, and they should be induced to remain at the court in the hope obtaining large *jagirs* and their affairs prolonged till the action against Kam Baksh was over. Whatever was deemed suitable could then be done. In the meantime, Rajput resistance would have been crushed and their strength sapped'.<sup>16</sup>

After effecting their escape, Jai Singh and Ajit Singh proceeded to Udaipur, where they made an agreement with the Maharana for joint resistance to the Mughals. If the Rajput tradition be accepted, the Rajput rajas planned not only to recover their countries but to expel the Mughal influence from Rajputana completely and even dreamt of bringing the entire Hindustan under their sway. It was proposed at the conference that the Rana should be made Emperor of Hindustan after turning out the Mughals from India but Ajit Singh claimed the throne for himself and so the matter was dropped.<sup>17</sup>

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16 . Mirza Mohammad, *Ibrat Nama*, 56b.

17 . *Vir Vinod*, ii, 767.

Khafi Khan says that one Saif Khan had firmed an agreement with the Rajputs for the supply of 17,000-18,000 Rajput horsemen to Kam Bakhsh for making a sudden descent on Delhi while Bahadur Shah was in Deccan. But the proposal was rejected by Kam Bakhsh.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile information was received that a daughter of Jai Singh had been promised to the Rana, and that the three chiefs had entered into an agreement for joint resistance. This was inspite of the fact that the Rana had sent in letters professing submission.<sup>19</sup>

In July 1708 Jalhpur was surrounded by thirty thousand Rathore horse; and after five days Mehrab Khan the *faujdar*, through the intervention of Durgadas Rathore capitulated and was allowed to retreat with honour. In a few days a letter came from Shujat Khan Barha, subahdar of Ajmer, informing his Majesty that the Rajah having collected 2007 horsemen and 15,000 infantry, had sent this force against Amber, under the leadership of Ram Chand Sanwaldas. Sayyid Husain Khan, Ahmad Said Khan, and Mahmud Khan, reinforced by 2000 horse and 1000 foot sent by subahdar, had come out to meet the enemy, of whom seven hundred were slain. Shujat Khan said he had rewarded Husain Khan, and hoped that his own good service would be appreciated. This

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18 . *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, pp. 619-20.

19 . *Bahadur Shah Nama*, 110.

lying report being accepted as true, there was much rejoicing in the imperial camp, with a distribution of gifts and liberal promotion.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile Asad Khan, the Wakil-i-mutlaq was ordered to move from Delhi to Agra and to take the necessary steps to reduce that part of the country to order. Chin Qilich Khan, Subahar of Oudh, Khan Jahan subahdar of Allahabad, Muhammad Amin Khan, faujdar of Muradabad were directed to move with half of their forces to reinforce Asad Khan. Sayyid Husain Khan, faujdar of Mewat wrote to the subahdar of Delhi for reinforcements. But these nobles never marched, instead Asad Khan and Zulfiqar Khan, who did not apparently agree with Munim Khan's Rajput policy, opened negotiations with Jai Singh and Ajit Singh.<sup>21</sup> The Mughals were prepared to restore Amber to Jai Singh, and Jodhpur to Ajit Singh, but were not prepared to relinquish their hold on their capitals. The Rajputs demanded restoration of all of their *watans*, *mansabs* of 5000/5000 and appointment to important posts.

Meanwhile, the rainy season of 1708 was over. The Rajput armies invaded sambhar. In a battle, the noted warrior Sayyid Husain Khan was accidentally killed, and this gave the Rajputs a notable victory. But they made little progress elsewhere, and contented themselves mostly with plundering.<sup>22</sup>

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20 . *Bahadur Shah Nama*, 112.

21 . *vir Vindo*, ii, 768; See also William Irvine, *Later Mughals*, I, 67-70.

22 . *Bahadur Shah nama*, 421-58.



Even this limited success of the Rajputs was a blow to Imperial Prestige. Mirza Muhammad, the author of *Ibratnama* and *Tarikh-i-Muhammadi* exclaims bitterly: 'If one of the old grandees with a tried and tested following had been nominated the subahdar of Ajmer and two brave and well-known officers fully equipped with all necessary materials put in charge of Jodhpur, what courage had the Rajputs to win back their countries. Saiyid Husain Khan Baraha was a brave and courageous man, but he was a newly risen noble and did not possess the confidence of people, or have sufficient means at his disposal (to cope with the situation).<sup>23</sup>

On 6 October 1708, the Rajput rajas were restored to their *mansab* at the instance of Asad Khan and Prince Azim-ush Shan who was then the favourite of his father.<sup>24</sup> But the question of returning their capitals (*Watan jagir*) was not decided. Asad, who had been put in supreme charge of the Province of Lahore, Delhi, Ajmer, offered to grant sanads of their homelands to the rajas provided they raise their thanas from Sambhar and Didwana and accepted appointment to the provinces of Kabul and Gujarat. But the Rajas were not willing to be separated, or to

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23 . *Ibratnama*, 57a.

24 . In December, Asad khan reported that the Rajput affair had ended. The emperor was pleased, and remarked – 'well done' In reality it is Ad Khan who is governing Hindustan.

accept appointment far away from their Homes, and asked for the posts of the Subahdars of Malwa and Guajrat.<sup>25</sup>

Soon after, differences arose among the Rajput Rajas. Ajit Singh having reoccupied Jodhpur with help of combined forces of the Rana and Jai Singh, showed no eagerness to march against Amber according to his agreement. His absence rankled Jai Singh who therefore delayed in joining the campaign against Sambhar. On his finally doing so, and the Rajput force having overrun Sambhar and Didwana, Jai Singh proposed that they should be returned to the Mughals in order to facilitate an agreement with them. The Rana supported Jai Singh. In February 1709 Ajit Singh besieged Ajmer with 20,000 *sawar*. Although Jai Singh had promised to march against Ajmer from Amber by forced marches as soon as news was received that Ajit Singh had left Merta, he did not move out of Amber. Ajit Singh, on extracting Rs. 80,000 from the *subahdar*, Shujaat Khan, left for Devaliya for his marriage, and returned to Jodhpur 30 March 1709.

It is thus apparent that the united front of the three rajas had started showing cracks as soon as their main objectives had been realized, viz. the recovery of their watan by Ajit Singh and Jai Singh, and of the parganas of Pur, Mandal and Bidnur by the Rana. The proposal to post Jai

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25 . *Jaipur Road*; Wakil's report d. 28, 30 June 12 July 1709.

Singh and Ajit Singh to widely separated provinces, such as Malwa and Kabul, coupled with Bahadur Shah's threat to deal with them sternly on his return to north India led to their uniting once again.

Meanwhile after having crossed the Narmada on 25 December 1709, Bahadur Shah marched by way of Mandu and Nalcha. On the 15 May 1710, the army passed Tonk and camped at Dandwa Sarai on the banks of the Banas, 30 *kos* from Ajmer.

On the 22 May 1710 the Rajahs letters were presented through Prince Azim-ush-Shan and on the prince's prayer their offences were pardoned and *Khelats* were conferred by the prince. On 26 May 1720, when the army reached Toda, eighteen *Khelats* from the Emperor were given to the servants of Rana Amar Singh and Ajit Singh and Jai Singh, and also one to the carrier of a letter from Durgadas Rathor.<sup>26</sup>

While these negotiations were proceeding with the Rajputs, there came the unwelcome news of a rising of the Sikhs in the north of Sirhind, under one Fath Singh<sup>27</sup>, who had been joined by many scavengers, leather dressers and nomadic traders (i.e., Banjaras). Wazir Khan, the faujdar of Sarhind had been killed in a fight with these men on the 22 May 1710. This news forced on a speedy solution of the difficulty with the Rajputs.

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26 . *Tazkirat us Salatin-i chagatai*, 67-68.

27 . Kamwar Khan is the only writer who gives this name others call him 'the false Guru' or 'the second Govind'. The Sikhs call him Banda (slave).

It was seen that a popular rising, such as that of the Sikhs, in a portion of the Empire so near the capital, might have much more serious and far reaching consequences than the then pending quarrel with the Rajputs', who even if left in quiet possession of their hereditary country, were not likely to be thereby encouraged to further aggressions. It was therefore determined to come to as speedy a settlement with them as possible.<sup>28</sup>

At the request of Munim Khan, the Wazir his eldest son, Mahabat khan, was sent off to persuade the Rajahs that they had nothing to fear if they came in and presented themselves. After three days, when the emperor was encamped at the village of Deorais, the minister informed his Majesty that his son Mahabat Khan writing from the village of Gangwana where he had met the Rajahs, reportedly that they had entered into an agreement to come in on the 20 June. Munim Khan was ordered to proceed to the Rajahs and bring them in after repeating in person the assurance conveyed through his son.

Hence, a settlement was hurriedly patched up with the Rajput rajas. Their homelands were returned to them, and their demand for an audience with the Emperor on the march (Sar-i-sawari, i.e. not in the court), to which they were to be escorted by prince Azim ush Shan was accepted. It was further agreed that they would be given six months, leave

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28 . *Tarikh-i Mubarak*, 67.

immediately after their audience with the emperor, after which they would serve wherever appointed. On 21 June 1710, while the emperor was on the march, the two rajas were presented before him by Mahabat Khan, the son of Munim Khan. After the customary greetings and presents, they were immediately given six months leave to return home.<sup>29</sup>

These terms which one contemporary writer declares as 'far above their status'<sup>30</sup> and another as 'inconsistent with good policy as well as the dignity of the sovereign' could really be only a first step in a sound policy aimed at the reconciliation of the Rajputs. Bahadur Shah was keen that the Rajputs should serve against the Sikhs, and presumably, against the Marathas as well. In other words, he wanted them to act as the sword arm of the Mughal empire as before. But for such a policy to succeed, an attitude of magnanimity, and not crude suspicion was required. The Rajput rajas wanted not only the restoration of their homelands but that they should be granted high mansabs as before, and appointed as subahdars of important provinces like Malwa and Gujarat.<sup>31</sup> These two provinces adjoined their homelands as well as each other, and in their prevailing mood of distrust, the two rajas seem to have considered appointment to the charge of these provinces as a guarantee of good faith on the part of the emperor.

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29 . *Ibratnama*, 58b; *Muntakhab-ut Lubab*, 66.

30 . *Tarikh-i Mubarak*, 68.

31 . *Vir Vinod*, 949.

To show how little the Rajputs trusted the solemn promises made to them that they would be treated well, the fact mentioned by Kamwar Khan, a Historian, who was present in the retinue of Prince Rafi-ush-Shan should be noted, "Beyond the four princes and the great nobles there was no one else with the Emperor at the time. Kanwar Khan, while the interview was proceeding, saw that all the hills and plains round them were full of Rajputs. There were several thousand men on camels hidden in the hollow of the hills. On each camel rode two or even three men, fully armed with match-lock or bow and arrows. Evidently they were prepared to sell their lives dearly in defense of their chieftains, if there was any attempt at treachery.

The Rajput affairs remained in this condition during the remaining years of Bahadur Shah's reign. Munim Khan was not inclined to accept the demands of the Rajput rajas for appointment as the Governor of Malwan and Gujarat. He urged them to accept, instead, appointment to Kabul and Gujarat. Azim ush Shan who posed as the friend of the Rajputs, promised them appointment to the east – or leave to return home if that was not acceptable', after the rajas had come to the court.<sup>32</sup> But the Rajput rajas were not enthusiastic about either of these proposals and hence they delayed in making their appearance at the court. It was only in

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32 . *Vir Vinod*, 948.

October 1711, after repeated summons, and the lapse of more than 15 months after they had secured six months leave that the two rajas arrived at the court to render service.<sup>33</sup> Munim Khan was dead by this time and prince Azim ush Shan had become the centre of all affairs. The rajas were appointed to Sadhaura and served there with 'a large army', guarding the foothills from the raids of Banda's followers.<sup>34</sup>

After two and a half months, Jai Singh was made the faujdar of Ahmadabad Khora alias Chitrakut, and Ajit Singh of Sorath in Gujarat. These fell short of Rajput expectations<sup>35</sup>, and they petitioned for permission to return home. In keeping with his promise, the emperor agreed to this, but with the proviso that they should leave a *chauki* behind, and in January 1712, the rajas started back for their homes.

However, Rana Amar Singh of Mewar had again managed to avoid personal appearance. And notwithstanding the *nazars* and bows of the other two rajas, it was evident that the imperial authority was at that moment non-existent in Rajasthan with the subedar and garrison at Ajmer reduced to a symbol.

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33 . *Ibratnama*, 39a.

34 . *Akhbarat*, 1, *Ziqadah* 11 Dec. 1711.

35 . Cf. the Remarks of Aurangzeb in one of his letters that the faujdari of Sorath was not an inferior thing, and that formerly persons of the rank of 5,000 were appointed to it Raqain-i-karaim ff. 9a-b.

## *Chapter 4*

# *Deccan Problems*



## CHAPTER – 4

### DECCAN PROBLEM

After ascending the throne, Bahadur Shah (Shah Alam) was compelled to reckon with the problems which Aurangzeb had bequeathed to his successors. The general problem of maintaining law and order especially in the Deccan where the Marathas posed a serious challenge to the Mughals was one of the many problems facing the Empire.

In facing these problems, Bahadur Shah inclined towards a policy of cautious compromise and conciliation, both on account of his character and general outlook, and the concrete situation with which he was faced.

The political views of Bahadur Shah during the period of his principhood are rather obscure. He held the post of Viceroy of the Deccan several times, but his policy and general conduct of affairs were considered weak and unsatisfactory by the Emperor who, for this reason, did not permit him to hold independent charge of the Deccan for any length of time.<sup>1</sup> During the final operations against Bijapur and Golkonda, he was accused of colluding and conspiring with Abul Hasan, the king of Golkonda, and was placed in confinement by the Emperor.

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1. Bahadur Shah was the Viceroy of the Deccan after the removal of Shaishta Khan from 1667-42 and from 1678-80 (*Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, 45, 57). Throughout this period, the actual command of the field armies was entrusted to some prominent noble appointed directly by Aurangzeb.

According to Khafi Khan who wrote about forty years after these events, the prince considered the invasion of Golkonda a breach of faith and desired that 'war and peace should be dependent on his approval as heir apparent and that so far as possible he should bind Abul Hasan to his interest'. For these reasons he had wanted to use his influence with the Emperor to obtain a pardon for Abul Hasan. <sup>2</sup>

At the time of Bahadur Shah accession the Deccan problem was complicated by the presence of a royal competitor in the Deccan, Kam Bakhsh who had struck coins and had *khutba* read in his name, thus proclaiming his independence. Aurangzeb had over-run the Deccan plateau and extinguished the independent states existing there. In order to meet the two-fold problem of establishing a sound administrative system in those parts, and of overcoming the Maratha opposition, Aurangzeb had spent the last 26 years of his life in Deccan but he could achieve only limited success. With his death, the problem became all the more complicated and finding a solution was difficult. The nobles were already restive at their prolonged stay in the Deccan away from northern India which the large majority of them regarded as their home. A new monarch was not likely to have sufficient authority to compel them to prolong their stay in the Deccan much longer. Besides, continued concentration on the

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2. *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 331-32.

Deccan was liable to have serious repercussions on northern India, the resources of which formed the mainstay of the Mughal Empire.

The scheme for the partition of Empire ascribed to Aurangzeb was apparently aimed at providing a solution to the twin problems for securing the extension of the Mughal Empire to the entire country and, at the same time, setting up in the Deccan a local administration strong enough to counter the Maratha depredations.

On the eve of the battle of Jaju, Bahadur Shah had offered to abide by the provisions of the will of Aurangzeb. He now made a similar offer to Kam Bakhsh. 'Our father entrusted to you the Subah of Bijapur' he wrote to Kam Bakhsh in a letter sent through Hafiz Ahmad Mufti alias Matbar Khan. 'We now relinquish to you the two subah of Bijapur and Haiderabad with all subjects and belongings, upon the condition according to the old rules of the Dakhin, that the coins shall be struck and the *Khutba* read in our name. The tribute which has hitherto been paid by the governors of the two provinces we remit. You should do justice to the people, punish the disobedient, and expel the robbers and oppressors from that area.<sup>3</sup>

It is not easy to decide if Bahadur Shah was sincere in his offer. He may have hoped that the old kingdoms of Bijapur and Golkonda, united

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3. *Muntakhab ul Lubab*, 68; *Tarikh-i-Mubrahi*, 54; *Bahadur Shah Nama*, 386-90; *Tazkirat us Salatin Chagtai*, 88b.

under a Timurid prince, would be able to maintain internal law and order and at the same time, provide an effective check to the Marathas.<sup>4</sup>

Such a kingdom would also not conflict with the principle of an all India Timurid monarchy. But the scheme could not be given a trial at all, for Kam Bakhsh scornfully rejected Bahadur Shah's offer. This enabled the latter to cast on the head of Kam Bakhsh the onus of shedding the blood of innocent Muslims.<sup>5</sup>

If Kam Bakhsh had taken effective possession of all the important forts and fortresses in the provinces of Bijapur and Golkonda, secured the support and confidence of his nobles and reached some kind of an understanding with the Marathas he would have posed a serious threat to Bahadur Shah. Kam Bakhsh did make approaches towards the Marathas, but with little success. He failed to bring the Karnatak under his control due to the opposition of Daud Khan, the deputy of Zulfiqar Khan. In the north, the commandant of Golkonda, Nazr Beg Khan, who was in touch with Bahadur Shah, refused to submit to him.<sup>6</sup> Most of the other nobles also sought to reinsure themselves by entering into secret correspondence with Bahadur Shah. Matters were made worse by Kam Bakhsh's

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4 . Cf. the view of JDB Gribble (History fo the Deccan, 1898, ii, 337).

5 . *Bahadurshah Nama*, 385.

6 . Bahadur Shah had made various attempts to retain Haiderabad by granting concessions to the Governor, Rustam Dil Khan, *Bahadur Shah Nama*, 130; On 7 April, the *subahdari* of the Deccan was offered to Azim ush Shan, *Bahadur Shah Nama*, 257. As no reply had been received from Kan Bakhsh till then, this suggests that Bahadur Shah was either nor sincere about his offer, or felt confident that Kam Bakhsh would reject it.

suspicious bent of mind which led him to unjustly entertain doubts about the loyalty of Taqarrub Khan, the *Mir Bakhshi* and one of his most energetic officers. Hence, he imprisoned Taqarrub Khan and executed him along with a number of his adherents.<sup>7</sup>

The result of all these was that the officers and men of Kam Bakhsh deserted him in large numbers as Bahadur Shah approached near, till Kam Baksh was left with only a small dispirited following. Deeming flight to be dishonourable, he put up a desperate but futile resistance and died fighting on the battlefield (13 January 1709). In this way, the civil war which had kept parts of the country in an unsettled state for two years, finally ended with the victory of Bahadur Shah who now ruled over one of the most extensive empires ever ruled by an Indian king. The victory of Bahadur Shah strengthened the idea of all India monarchy, and implied the defeat, for the time being, of the forces of regional separatism. The idea of the political unity of the country remained one of the cardinal political beliefs in the country, and effected, in some degree or the other, all political movements which developed in the country during the eighteenth century. For instance, it found expression, in the continued acceptance of the Mughal king as the Emperor of India even when all power and glory had departed from him.

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7. *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 605-21.

Bahadur Shah had next to make suitable arrangements for the administration of the Deccan. At first, the post of the Viceroy of the six *subahs* of Deccan was offered to prince Azim ush Shan, who had been gradually gaining favour with him. However, Azim ush Shan preferred the charge of the eastern provinces – Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Allahabad, some of which he had governed during Aurangzeb's lifetime. The post was therefore conferred upon Zulfiqar Khan.<sup>8</sup> He was granted full authority in all the revenue and administrative matters pertaining to the Deccan, and allowed to remain at the court and to combine his new appointment with his previous post of *mir bakhshi*. His old associate and protégé, Daud Khan Panni was made his deputy in the Deccan and granted the *mansab* of 7,000/5,000 and the governorship of Bijapur, Berar and Aurangabad.<sup>9</sup>

By virtue of holding two such important posts as those of the Mir Bakhshi and the (absentee) viceroy of the Deccan, Zulfiqare Khan became one of the most powerful nobles in the empire. Prior to this, the Mughal Emperors had never permitted one person to hold two such posts, whatever may have been the exigencies of the situation. Moreover Zulfiqar Khan was not prepared to tolerate any interference in the revenue or any other matter pertaining to the Deccan. It appears that

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8. *Akhbarat*, 24 Oct. 1708.

9. *Tazkirat us Salatin Chagtai*, 319a.

Munim Khan was opposed to the grant of such wide powers to Zulfiqar Khan. He put forward the argument that the province of Burhanpur (Khandesh) and half of Berar generally known as Pain-Ghat, did not form a part of the Deccan, because Khandesh had been a part of the independent kingdom of the Farukis, and Pain-Ghat had been annexed by Akbar. He wanted to include these subahs in the provinces dependent on Delhi, and to vest the authority over the political and revenue affairs, and the appointment, dismissal and transfer of officers in those areas in the hands of his eldest son, Mahabat Khan, who held the post of the third bakhshi. This caused bitterness between Munim Khan and Zulfiqar Khan, and the dispute reached such heights that it became the common talk of the camp. As Bahadur Shah disliked taking decisions in matters involving disputes between nobles, the prevailing situation apparently continued.<sup>10</sup> Thus Zulfiqar Khan remained the viceroy of the Deccan with sole authority over its affairs.

There can be little doubt that the delegation of larger powers to the Viceroy of the Deccan, or to his deputy was an administrative necessity. But in the background of the growing feebleness of the central government, and the persistence of strong separatist tendencies in the Deccan, this served to stroke the fires of ambition in the breasts of

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10. *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, ii, 626-27; *Maasir ul Umara*, ii, 70-3.

powerful nobles who were already casting covetous eyes on the Deccan. Along with the posts of *wazir* and *mirbakhshi*, the post of the Viceroy of the Deccan became one of the chief prizes in the struggle between parties and factions at the court.

The big test of the new viceroy's authority and influence was his ability to secure a settlement of the Maratha question along lines forced by him. But here he found it much more difficult to have his own way. After the defeat of Kam Bakhsh, in May 1709 Zulfiqar Khan introduced Shahi's Wakil Gangadhar Prahlad to the Emperor.

He presented an application for the grant of the *Chauth* and *Sardeshmukhi* for the six *subahs* of the Deccan on condition of restoring prosperity to ruined land. At the same time, Munim Khan presented Yadukesh the *wakil* of Tara-Bai, praying for a farman in the name of her son, Shivaji II. She asked only for *sardeshmukhi* without any reference to *chauth*, and also offered to suppress other insurgents and to restore order in the country. A great contention upon the matter arose between the two ministers. In the end, Bahadur Shah, who was unwilling to displease either side, ordered that *sanads* for *sardeshmukhi* be given in compliance with the requests of both Munim Khan and Zulfiqar Khan.<sup>11</sup> In other

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11. *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 627, 783; *Tarikh-I Ibrahimi*, Elliot, viii, 259; *Maasir ul Umara*, ii, 351 says that Bahadur Shah granted 10 percent as *Sardeshmukhi* out of the total collections of (only the five) *subahs* of Aurangabad, Khandesh, Berer, Bijapur and Bidar.



words, he refused to recognize Shahu as the rightful Maratha King, as had been done all along by Aurangzeb. He also rejected the claim for *chauth*. Only *sardeshmukhi* was granted, and even for that, the rival claimants were left to fight it out. This was a negation of the policy of giving first priority to the task of restoring peace and order in the Deccan, for fighting each other. Both sides were only too likely to plunder the Mughal territories. In fact, that is what did happen Bahadur Shah had no sooner left the deccan than Shahu came out of Raigarh and issued an order to his *sardars*: 'The Emperor has granted me the sardeshmukhi of these parks, but not yet the chauth. You should therefore raid the Imperial territories and create disorder these (till he agrees to do so).<sup>12</sup>

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Bahadur Shah's Maratha policy was short-sighted and ill conceived. He was really called upon to choose between the advise of the *Wazir* who was the chief counselor in matters political, and that of the Viceroy of the Deccan whose special responsibility was the Deccan including Maratha affairs.

By rejecting the advise of Zulfiqar Khan he threw away a golden chance of settlement with the Marathas. The Marathas power was then at its lowest ebb. Shahu position was insecure at home, and if Bahadur Shah had extended recognition to him, he could have gained Shahu's gratitude

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12 . *Akhbarat*, 21 Sep. 1709.

and friendship. Besides, Shahu's succession had always been favoured by Aurangzeb, and on coming to the throne, Bahadur Shah himself had tacitly recognized this claim by restoring Shahu to his former *mansab*, sending him a *farman* and other presents in acknowledgement of his congratulations on his succession<sup>13</sup> and calling upon him to render military help against Kam Bakhsh.<sup>14</sup> Shahu had expressed his inability to attend in person, but sent one of his best known sardars, Nimaji, with a large force, which did good service. Earlier, on his way back after escaping from captivity, Shahu had demonstrated his loyalty by ostentatiously visiting the tomb of Aurangzeb near Daulatabad.<sup>15</sup>

As far the terms to be offered to the Marathas, Zulfiqar Khan who was a man of wide experience and well-acquainted with Maratha character and politics, seems to have been of the opinion that a policy of half hearted concession was of no use. He apparently felt that the times were ripe for a bold and far-reaching re-orientation of policy in the deccan with the object of making the Marathas partners in the empire from opponents, and of utilizing their military and administrative talents for the maintenance of peace and order in the Deccan by giving them a stake in its prosperity and good governance.

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13 . *Bahadur Shah nama*, 114; *Tazkirat us Salatin Chagtai*, 86a, *Maasir ul Umara*, ii, 342.

14 . *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 625; Duff, *History of the Marathas*, I, 420.

15 . *Ibid.*, 583.

Soon after Bahadur Shah's departure, news was received of Maratha depredations in the subahs of Burhanpur, Bijapur and Aurangabad. A large band of Marathas entered the subah of Bijapur in 1710, and moved in the direction of Ahmadnagar. Rustam Khan Bijapuri, the Governor, who held the rank of 8,000/8000 moved against them, but they eluded battle. When this news reached Bahadur Shah, he reduced the rank of Rustam Khan by 1,000 as a mark of displeasure, but soon relented, and appointed the Khan to Berar in addition to his former charge. Meanwhile, another band of Marthas invaded Burhanpur, and plundered upto the outskirts of the capital. The Governor, Mir Ahmad Khan came out to fight, but was completely surrounded by the Marathas. The Khan put up a desperate fight but perished in the course of the battle, while two of his sons were wounded. Another band of Marathas appeared near Aurangabad and plundered the inhabitants of the surrounding areas. The deputy viceroy, Daud Khan Panni, took the field against them but the Marathas refused to fight and moved away at his approach. By this time, the rainy season was approaching and campaigning came to an end.<sup>16</sup>

After the rains, the Marathas appeared in force again. Chandrasen Jadhav besieged the foot of Vijaydurg, and then moved on to Kulbarga; Haibat Rao Nimbalkar, alongwith Sima, Jagannath etc. invaded Bijapur

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16 . *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 666.

but was chased out of the subah by Hiranman, the deputy of Daud Khan. Ganga, one of the dismissed sardars of Firoz Jang, created widespread disturbances in Malwa and Burhanpur. A body of 40,000 Marathas, raided the Junnair areas under the instructions of Shahu, and looted the jagirs of Zulfiqar Khan<sup>17</sup>. The Mughals were apparently powerless to check these inroads, though Daud Khan Panni moved about with a large army, chasing the Marathas. He took over charge from Rustam Khan who had repeatedly failed against them, chased out Santa Ghorpade from Khandesh, made sound arrangements for its defence and sent his nephew, Alawal Khan to look after Berar. He also tried to sow dissension among the Marathas by his diplomacy. Towards the end of 1710, Rao Rambha Nimbalkar joined the Mughals. He was welcomed into Aurangabad by Daud Khan who secured for him the mansab of 7,000/6,000 and the rank of 5,000 each for two of his lieutenants. The next to desert was Paima Raj Sidhia. The most important defection, however, was that of Chandrasen Jadhav who joined the Mughals in March 1711, after a clash with Balaji Vishwanath over a hunting incident, though he had been in contact with the Mughals even earlier.

It was probably about this time that Daud Khan entered into a private pact with Shahu. According to this pact, the *Chauth* and

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17 . *Akhbarat*, August 1710 to March 1711.

*Sardeshmukhi* of the Deccan was promised to Shahu. However, it was not to be collected by the Maratha agents, but by Daud Khan's deputy, Hiranman, who would pay it to the Mughals in a lump sum. The jagirs of the princes and the high grandees were to be exempt from any change. No written confirmation of this agreement was given to the Marathas<sup>18</sup>, but it could hardly have been made without the knowledge and active support of Zulfiqar Khan, and the tacit consent of the emperor.

The pact was a god-send to Shahu for it bolstered his prestige in Maharashtra at a time when he had reached the nadir of his career. But it failed to bring peace to the unfortunate Deccan. The agreement 'gave birth to an infinity of bickerings and troubles, which always ended in some blood... the hands of the Marathas stretched everywhere, their agents appeared in all places according to usage, and levied *chauth*<sup>19</sup>. In December 1711, Mir Ahmad Khan, the Governor of Burhanpur, was killed in a fight against a band led by a woman, Tulsi Bai.<sup>20</sup> The Marathas besieged Karnul, Sholapur, Berigar and many other places in the Karnatak. Aku Ghorapade camped in the province with 70,000 men till he was chased across the river by Diler Khan and Abd-un-Nabi Khan. The depredations of the Marathas gave an opportunity to the *zamindars*

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18 . *Muntakhab ul Lubab*, 788.

19 . *Ibid.*, 738, 742.

20 . *Maasir ul Umera*, iii, 764-65.

who rose up everywhere, and the authority of the Mughals remained only in name in the Karnataka.<sup>21</sup>

Daud Khan's pact constituted a fundamental departure from the policy of Aurangzeb. The Maratha claim for the *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* of the Deccan was conceded in substance, though not in form. But this did not bring to the Mughal Empire the benefits that might have been expected, which is, peace in the Decan and the establishment of friendly relations with the Marathas. A major reason for this was that the Maratha king had ceased to have any real control over the Maratha chiefs, most of whom owed him only a tenuous allegiance and plundered largely on their own account. In other words, the forces of anarchy let loose in the Deccan as a result of the virtual destruction of the Maratha state by Aurangzeb could not be controlled easily, or in a short time. Only the joint cooperation of the Mughal authority and the Maratha king could bring the free booting Maratha chiefs under control once again. But past suspicions and Mughal arrogance stood in the path of such cooperation. The refusal of Mughals to put the agreement for *Chauth* and *Sardeshmukhi* in writing served to keep suspicious alive, and emphasized the essentially temporary nature of the agreement. The intrigues of the Mughal officials in the Deccan with the domestic enemies of Shahu also had an unsettling effect, and served to keep the Maratha civil war going.

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21 . *Akhbarat*, Dec. 1711 – July 1712.

## *Chapter 5*

# *Mughal Sikh Relations*

## **CHAPTER – 5**

### **MUGHAL SIKH RELATIONS**

The Sikhs who made such a sudden and startling appearance on the stage of history represent the youngest of the major religions of India. Tracing their origins to their first guru, Nanak, who was active in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century they acquired their distinctive identity only towards the latter part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, under the tenth and last Guru, Gobind. But for him they would probably have remained one among the many reformists. Cults and sects which have periodically revolted against Brahminical domination. But Guru Gobind Singh, as he now styled himself, gave them a distinctive militant character. The core of the new faith was the khalsa, a kind of military brotherhood sworn to resist injustice and tyranny, in some ways comparable to the orders of European chivalry which personified the militant aspect of the Christian church.

Guru Gobind passed away in the Deccan in November 1708. His father Guru Tegh Bahadur had been executed in Delhi in 1675 and much of his life had been spent in arms against the imperial power, represented by the Faujdar Wazir Khan of Sirhind, in whose jurisdiction fell Anandpur, the seat of his authority. Two young sons were killed in battle, two others, still children fell into his hands and were sealed alive in the



vaults of the citadel, which became thus the visible symbol of oppression and tyranny.

That the Guru himself had no ambition of attacking or challenging the imperial authority *per se* is clear from the manner in which, after the death of Aurangzeb, he paid his respects to Bahadur Shah, and according to the Sikh traditions he is credited with having fought at Jajau with a band of his followers on his side. His object appears to have been to raise his followers from the status of servile subjects of a despotic monarchy to the level of freemen who would not brook any man's tyranny and could look any badshah in his eyes, be he Turk or Indian.

After his military contribution to the enthronement of Bahadur Shah, the Guru for some unexplained reason retired to the Deccan, where on the banks of Godavari he ran into a *bairagi* by the name of Madhav Das, a Rajput by birth, who dabbled in sorcery and lived the life of a recluse.<sup>1</sup>

Some how this dubious character became the Guru's *chela*, and as he lay dying following a murderous assault by an Afghan horse trader, the Guru designated him heir to his temporal inheritance, the spiritual guru gaddi having ceased with himself.

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1. Ganda Singh, *Banda Singh Bahadur*, p. 1. His original name was Lachhman Dev or Lachhim Das. He was given the name of Madhav Das upon his initiation into the bairagi order.

Whatever may be the truth as to his origin and antecedents, this man was now sent off secretly from the Dakhin. At the same time letters were written to the Punjab, informing the disciples that their Guru had been slain in the Emperor's camp by the dagger of an Afghan. But just before his death, their leader had announced that in a short time, through the power of transmigration, he would appear again clothed with sovereignty, and whenever he should raise the standard of independence, they would be joining him secure prosperity in this world and salvation in the next, immediate collection of cash and goods must be made. Expectation was thus aroused, and the new manifestation awaited.

On 4 May 1710 when the emperor was near the Narmada, news was received from the Diwan of Lahore and Sirhind under a man who gave himself out as Guru Govind. The emperor ordered the various faujdars to take suitable action, but the uprising spread rapidly and on 22 May 1710, Wazir Khan, the faujdar of Sirhind was defeated and killed and the town ravaged and plundered.

With the help of the local hill rajas and other (upper class) Hindu allies, and by relentless pressure Aurangzeb had been successful in crushing the rebellion of Guru Govind. But the underlying causes of the trouble had remained. When Bahadur Shah marched from Lahore to contest the throne with Azam, Guru Govind joined him at the head of a

small following, and received a *mansab*. After the death of Guru Govind Singh, there was apparent peace in the Punjab till the beginning of the Sikh uprising under Banda who gave himself out as Guru Govind Singh. It was an age of superstition and the masses could easily be imposed upon. All contemporary authorities agree that the Guru drew his main support from the lower classes – the Jats and Khattris and ‘people of such ignoble professions, as the scavengers and leather dressers. Banda, the ‘false guru’, amassed a following of 7,000-8,000 men with 4,000-5,000 ponies at first, but soon increased his strength to 17,000 and then to 40,000 well armed men.<sup>2</sup>

Banda’s first clash with the imperial authorities was at Sonapat near Delhi where the faujdar came out with a small force to disperse what he thought were mere rabble. But he was unpleasantly surprised and had to beat a hasty retreat and shut himself up in his fort. Thus emboldened, Banda turned towards Sirhind where Wazir Khan<sup>3</sup>, now in his eightieth years was still the faujdar.

As a prelude to the attack on the seat of the sarkar, Sadhawa was first sacked. Wazir Khan hurriedly mustered what troops he could and attacked Banda’s force with about 4,000 cavalry about 14 miles from

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2. *Muntakhab-ut Lubab*, ii, 562.

3. Muhammad Jan, entitled first Kar Talab Khan, then Wazir Khan rank 3000. The *Shamsher-i Khalsa*, 186, states that he was a native of Kunjpura, a town in the Karnal district.

Sirhind. At first the imperialists seemed to be gaining but a sudden attack in the rear, a clever flanking move on the part of Banda, turned the tables. Wazir Khan did not flinch but continued fighting till he was killed.

His body was strung up from a tree his baggage plundered and then the Sikhs, flushed with victory fell upon the defenseless town. For four days it was looted, its mosques defiled, and houses pillaged and burnt.

Banda established himself in the Shivalik foothills not far from Sadhaura and adjoining the territories of the Raja of Sirmoor, or the 'Barfi' Raja (the snow king) as he was called by the Mughals. He named it Lohgarh and assumed the style and manner of an independent ruler.

It was in December 1710 that the Emperor at last reached Lohgarh – 'the Refuge of the World, the walled city, ornament of the Fortune throne as it was described on the coins reportedly struck by Banda.<sup>4</sup> The place was invested and it seemed that Banda had reached the end of his road.

It was not as if the activities of the Sikh bands had been limited to the Cis-Sutluj region of the Delhi Sabha. The news of the fall and sack of the Sirhind had an electrifying effect on the Sikhs of the Punjab, Sikh bands had ravaged the Batala and Kalanaur parganas of the Bari Doab, right upto the environs of Lahore. Banda had crossed the sutlej and

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4. *Amanud dahr*, Maswarat Shahr, Zinat ut takht-i-mubarak bakht.

clashed with Shams Khan, faujdar of Jalandhar. The entire central Punjab was in the ferment.<sup>5</sup> The rising had sent call to all oppressed and the downtrodden, not merely the Sikhs, the peasants and others, but also the untouchables tanners and scavengers – the victims of Brahminical oppression as much as of Mughal tyranny. It partook in part some of the character of a revolution.

In these areas, the Sikhs set up their own administration. They appointed their own thanedars and tahsildars to collect revenue and appointed commandants in the towns they over run. Usually these officers were chosen from the lower classes. 'A low scavenger or leather dresser had only to leave his home and join the Guru, when in a short space of time he would return to his birth place with his order of appointment in his hand'.<sup>6</sup>

Even after making an allowance for exaggeration in such statements, the character of the Sikh uprising as a specific form of a lower class movement seems undeniable. The Sikhs persecuted the upper class Hindus no less than the Muslims, and, in most places, the local Hindu *zamindars* and wealthy people sided with the Mughal Government. But the Sikhs lacked any clear social and political objectives. The necessary economic basis for the creation of a new and higher social order was

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5. *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 660, 672.

6. *Mirat-i Waridat*, 392; William Irvine, *The later Mughals*, i, 98.

lacking. The most that the Sikhs could aim at was a rough kind of egalitarian society with a peasant clan basis. Such an attempt was bound to evoke the hostility of the privileged classes and hence, could only hope to succeed if it could rapidly mobilize a large and growing number of peasants. But the religious basis of the Sikh movement restricted its appeal, and made a more rapid growth of the movement difficult.<sup>7</sup>

Consequently, the imperialists were able to recover from their initial surprise, and to assume the counter offensive against the Sikhs. Asad Khan was ordered to march against the Guru. Chin Qulich Khan, Muhammad Amin Khan, Khan-i-Jahan the Governor of Allahabad, Saiyid Abdullah Khan Baraha and many others were deputed to help him and suitable advances were made to them for competing their preparations.<sup>8</sup> At the end of June, the Emperor left Ajmer and himself marched against the Sikhs. After opening the road between Delhi and Lahore which had been closed for many months, Bahadur Shah fixed his headquarters at Sadhaura near the foothills of the Himalayas where the Sikhs had built several forts for refuge. Lohgarh<sup>9</sup> which had been built by Guru Govind and where he and afterwards Banda lived is some sort of regal splendour, was stormed in December 1710. But unknown to the

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7. *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court*, p. 90.

8. *Akhbarat*, 28 June, 6 and 9 July, 1710.

9. Situated half way between Nahan and Sadhaura. Islam Shah son of Sher Shah, had began to build a fort here under the name of Pawagarh. It was left unfinished at his death; the ruins remained till Banda restored.

imperialist there was one secret path that was left unguarded and it was this that Banda used for his escape. He left behind one of his followers, a tobacconist named Gulabu who resembled him, dressed in royal finery. Gulabu was captured and the news was brought to Munim who passed it to the emperor and at the same time asked the band to strike up the triumphal music. But soon it was discovered that the hawk had flown and only the owl had been netted'.<sup>10</sup> Gulabu's true identity was soon exposed and the emperor flew into a rage and publicly unbraided his wazir for incompetence. Munim Khan was so affected by the firing he had received from his royal that he fell into a deep depression. According to some authorities, the fierce approaches of the emperor hastened the death of the wazir.

After the escape of Banda from Lohgarh, Bahadurshah seems to have lost interest in the affairs of the Sikhs. He returned to Lahore, leaving the imperial armies to continue operations against Banda. Thereafter, desultory fighting continued, with the Imperial troops not advancing beyond the foothills and the Guru making occasional descents into the plains for purposes of plunder. The Imperial commanders, Rustam dil and M Amin Khan chased in vain after the Guru who adopted guerilla tactics and refused to face the imperialists in a pitched battle.

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10. *Maasir ul Umara*, ii, pp. 297-8.

Evidently, the Guru had considerable local support in the plains. Thus, when he invaded the Baith Jalandhar, the Mughal commander withdrew in panic and local Sikhs and their supporters seized the opportunity to slaughter the mughal stragglers, and put their own armed posts in the towns of Batala and Kalanaur and in the surrounding villages. When the Imperial armies re-established their sway, they took drastic action against the Sikhs and their sympathizers, many of the innocent suffering with the guilty.<sup>11</sup> There was a spy scare in the royal camp itself, where many people were suspected of secretly being Sikhs and of passing on information to the Guru. Hence an order was issued that all Hindus should shave their beards.<sup>12</sup> Hindu *faqirs*, *yogis* and *sanyasis* who were suspected of spying for the Guru were also expelled from the royal camp.<sup>13</sup>

In spite of these precautions and efforts and the presence of the emperor, the operations against the Guru were not very fruitful. One cause of this was the mutual jealousy and quarrel of the two Mughal commanders, which led to the disgrace and imprisonment of Rustam Dil in September 1711. In Jan. 1712, when the emperor died, M. Amin Khan

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11 . Irvine Williams, *The later Mughals*, I, 119.

12 . Kanwar, *Akhbarat*, 19 August 1710.

13 . *Akhbarat*, 5, 9 Nov. 1711.



abandoned his post to take part in the civil war at Lahore and the Guru, seizing his opportunity recovered Sadhaura and Lohgarh.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, in spite of concentrating large armies and the best generals in the Punjab for a year and a half, Bahadur Shah failed to crush the Sikh uprising. The basic cause of this must be considered not so much the weakness of the Imperialists as the nature of the Sikh uprising and the tactics of the Guru.

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14 . *Ibrat Nama*, Mirza Muhammad, 42b-46b, Irvine, I, 121.

## *Chapter 6*

# *Socio-Cultural Scene*

THESIS



## CHAPTER – 6

### SOCIO-CULTURAL SCENE

The Mughal Empire underwent the process of disintegration in the 18<sup>th</sup> century accompanied by the collapse of its whole military and administrative structure. However the Mughal culture attained its most fully developed forms and continued to exercise a tremendous influence on the contemporary society for a long time to come.

The Mughal nobles, governors and local chieftains were primarily moved by the ambition of gaining political power, but they also combined the life of court and camp with a passion for intellectual pursuits for poetry, music, philosophy and science. At the same time there emerged religious and mystic movements which contributed to the moral transformation of society and growth of a cosmopolitan outlook among the people. Nadir shah was so deeply impressed by the elegant arts of India that he chose to take with him a number of artists, musicians, dancing girls, physicians and architects.<sup>1</sup>

The Muslims of India who were assimilated into the vast cultural complex of the country, adopted native languages for common use in day-to-day life. Though Persian remained the literary and official

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1. Zahiruddin Mallick, p. 343.

language till such time as it was dethroned by Urdu. They learnt Hindi dialects, like Braja Bhasha and Awadhi and their poets, saints and artists used them in expressing their ideas and feelings. "The devotional character of Hindi songs and the appeal which the language made to the *Sufis* brought Hindus and Muslims closer together than any other influence".<sup>2</sup> The Muslims also took a prominent part in the development of regional languages and literatures such as Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati and Sindhi. The growth of Urdu which took place during the long span of time from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries represents a process of linguistic and cultural synthesis, an admixture of Hindi grammar, Persian script and Arabic Persian vocabulary. The language grew into a rich and effective medium of expression for values and concepts common to both Hindus and Muslims. In the domain of art heterogeneous items took a more and more congruous shape, making its landscape pleasant and beautiful.<sup>3</sup> Thus, "an endless process of absorption, assimilation and adjustment of diverse elements and tendencies has gone for centuries giving shape and complexion to the cultural tradition of India".<sup>4</sup>

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2. M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, 166, 167, 170, 171.

3. Beni Prashad, *Hindu-Muslim Question*, Allahabad, 1941, p. 11.

4. Presidential Address by K.A. Nizami, *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Allahabad, 1965, 141.

In describing the cultural milieu of the period special attention may be given to the extravagant and ostentatious lifestyle of the elite and the position they occupied in society.

The Mughal nobles imitated their masters in their extravagant life of sensuality and pageantry. "When the Mogul government was in the plenitude of its power", observed William Hodges, "it was an object with the Omrahs or great Lords of the Court, to hold captive in their *Zananahs* (female apartments) even hundreds of females, collected from various quarters of empire, and particularly so from cashmire, a country famous for the beauty of its women".<sup>5</sup> The nobles amassed wealth at the expense of the state, especially in times when there was a weak man at the helm of affairs. For instance, during the reign of Farrukh Siyar, the Saiyid brothers acquired property worth a crore (ten million) rupees.<sup>6</sup>

The literature of the period is replete with references to the indulgence by nobles in all manner of sensual pleasure. Even if we make due allowance for poetic exaggeration, Mir Taqi Mir's observations on the luxurious life of nobles cannot be dismissed lightly.

Qutb ul Mulk Abdullah Khan is said to have been much addicted to the company of women. 'Saiyid Abdullah Khan', remarks

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5. Travels in India, p. 22. Also see Grose, *A voyage to the East Indies*, I, pp. 135.7, 138 and 140-1.

6. *Maasir ul Umara*, I, p. 837; Khafi Khan, II, p. 837; Kamwar, p. 280.

Khafi Khan, "had procured innumerable beautiful fairy faced women, and concubines.<sup>7</sup> He adds: "Abdullah Khan was much attached to the women and was a debauche. He included two or three most beautiful women belonging to the royal *haram* in his own female apartments. He collected seventy to eighty choicest and most beautiful and fascinating women, and in their company he passed most of his time in ratifying his animal desires.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Zulfiqar Khan who was *Wazir* under Jahandar shah was plunged deep in dissipation. Earlier, Munim Khan *Khan-i Khana*<sup>9</sup>, noble of the reign of Bahadur Shah I, amassed so much wealth that on his demise, goods and cash amounting to three crores of rupees were recovered from his house.<sup>10</sup>

The *Majlis-i Yazdahum* (the death anniversary of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani) organized by *Wazir ul Mamalik*, Qamaruddin Khan, presented a vivid picture of the luxurious life of the nobles. Dargah Quli Khan observes as follows : He celebrates the eleventh day of every month, and the dancing girls, musicians and mimics are invited to entertain the participants by their performances.<sup>11</sup> Amir-ul Umara Husain Ali Khan possessed fabulous wealth. Three hundred carts loaded

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7 . Khafi Khan, II, pp. 821-22.

8 . Khafi Khan, II, pp. 821-22.

9 . He was *Wazir* under Bahadur Shah I. For biographical notice see *Maasirul Umara* III, pp. 667-676.

10 . Later Mughals, I, pp. 124-25.

11 . *Muraqqa-i Dehli*, pp. 124-25.

with gold coins and untold silver coins were recovered from his house following his assassination.<sup>12</sup> He used to spend a good deal of money on the upkeep of his household and on dancing-girls and music parties; so much so that even his huge income did not suffice.<sup>13</sup>

The luxurious style of living of the nobles became so serious a source of moral degeneration of the rank and file of Muslim society that Yahya Khan in sheer despair prayed to God, saying :

“O God, inspire the *Khalifa* of the world and the *umara* (nobles) and *hukkam* (bureaucracy) of the Empire to devote themselves to the welfare of the common people and to make the country prosperous. Let them keep themselves busy in suppressing the refractory and disobedient elements, in supporting the weak and the old, in dispensing justice, in restoring the divine laws of Islam, in stamping out infidelity, and in reviving the honour of the prophet and his successors”.<sup>14</sup>

Not that there were no nobles of a pious and virtuous kind. It is said of Nizam-ul Mulk Asafjah<sup>15</sup>, for examples that he strictly adhered to the *awamir-wa-nawahi* of Islam (do's and don'ts) and passed some of his time in discussion with the *ulama* and the *mashaikh*. After his

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12 . Ahwalul Khawaqin, f. 177a.

13 . Maasir-ul Umara, I, p. 320. For a detailed account of the Wealth which he secured from the fort of Agra after the fall of Nekusiyar, see Khafi Khan II, p. 387.

14 . Tazkiratul Muluk, f. 140a.

15 . For his character, see, Khafi Khan II, pp. 747-50; Masirul Umara III, pp. 837-48.

morning prayers he attended to matters of state. In the afternoon, he offered his *zuhr* and *asr* prayer in company with Muslims, recited the Quran, read books on hadis. Thereafter he attended on mystic and pious men.

He was much devoted to the Saiyids, who claimed to be members of the families of the Prophet and holy *Imams*.<sup>16</sup> Similarly Saadat Khan Burhan-ul Mulk is credited with having been endowed with angelic virtues. He was a lover of justice. He was a brave soldier and a generous well-wisher of his soldiers. He was also devoted to religion. He observed the prescribed fasts, performed *namaz* and recited the *Quran*.

The nobles of the period maintained bands of singers and dancers. It is reported that Husain Ali Khan spent an enormous amount of money on them.<sup>17</sup> Khushhali Ram Jani, a famous dancing girl of Delhi, was attached to the court of Qamaruddin Khan.<sup>18</sup>

The general character of the Mughal nobility of the period was complex one, being compressed of both virtues and vices. Religion and worldiness went side by side.

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16. Khafi Khan, II, p. 749.

17. For details see Maasir ul Umara, I, p. 320.

18. Muraqqa-i Delhi, p. 77.



Raushan-ud Daula celebrated the *urs* of Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki with great pomp and splendour. Both sides of the road from old Delhi to the shrine (situated at Mehrauli), were illuminated. It is said that two lakhs of rupees were spent on the lights and on the food for *fatiha*.<sup>19</sup> Husain Ali Khan and Abdullah Khan too celebrated the feasts of *Yazdahum* and *duwazdahum*. It is recorded that Husain Ali Khan<sup>20</sup> used to send large sums of money every month to most of the cities for the *Niyaz* of the Saiyids and the saints. He gave orders to all provincial governors, saying that they should spend one hundred and eleven rupees on the eleventh day of every month, on the *fatiha* of *Pir Dastagir* and one hundred twelve rupees on the *fatiha* of the Holy Prophet on the twelfth day of every month. He himself spent a thousand and eleven and a thousand twelve rupees on the *fatiha* of *Pir Dastagir* (Ghaus Pak) and Holy Prophet. An equal amount was set apart for this purpose from the Imperial treasury too. The *mashaikh*, the divines, and the *ulama* were invited. For such recluses as were not in a position to come to the feast, they sent conveyances. Also with all humility and reverence, they personally served them in the assemblies. They stood with fans in their hands to whisk off the flies.<sup>21</sup>

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19. *Muraqqa-i Delhi*, pp. 37-39.

20. Husain Ali Khan reposed great faith in Saiyid Ghulam Husain Qadiri; a saint poet of Aurangabad.

21. Khafi Khan, II, pp. 635 and 964; *Maasir ul Umara* I, pp. 312-38.

In the same way, Nawab Alauddaulah Motamanul Mulk Jafar Khan Nusairi (Murshid Quli Khan) of Bengal celebrated the feast of Rabi-ul Awwal. Ghulam Husain Salim gives a detailed account of the festive aspects of the feast.<sup>22</sup> By an order, Abdullah Khan supported *Khadim vakil's* position with regard to get the *Nazar* offered by pilgrims in general, and by Jafar Khan Nusairi in particular at the shrine of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti of Ajmer. There are many documents relating to the shrine of Khwaja Sahib indicating the devotion of the Saiyid Brothers. From one of the documents it comes to light that Abdullah Khan earmarked 100 bighas of land at Ajmer for rose cultivation for the sake of offering at the shrine regularly and on the occasion of *urs*.<sup>23</sup> Their link with Ajmer shrine appears strong and hereditary. Syed Abdullah Mian, F/o Syed Husain Ali Khan laid out a garden, founded a quarter (*Mohalla*) known as Abdullahpura where water channel was brought from Ana Sagar lake. His wife tomb of beautiful carved marbles is still a monument of class. Hassan Ali Mausoleum and grave of others family members of Saiyids in it speaks volume of their devotional connection with Ajmer.<sup>24</sup>

The nobles at the Imperial court in Delhi and the provincial governors ordered celebrations whenever they recovered from an illness.

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22 . For details, see Riyazus Salatin, eng. Trans., p. 280.

23 . For details see, Dr. S.L.H. Moini, *Chisti shrine of Ajmer*, Pirs Pilgrims Practice, Jaipur, 2004.

24 . Har Bilas Sarada, *Ajmer, Historical and Descriptive*, pp. 173-175.

They had a ritualistic bath to mark the occasion. They received *nazar* from officers subordinate to them. They also distributed money in the form of *Sadaqa* and *Khairat*. The people of the time must have found it rather difficult to draw a line between extravagance and generosity. A perusal of the records would show that most of the nobles of the period were very generous towards the poor, the *ulama*, the *Sufis*, students, scholars, poets, artists and soldiers. Husain Ali Khan<sup>25</sup> was famous for his philanthropy. None of his soldiers, it was said was without gold and silver. Leaders of the contingent would go from camp to camp to tell the soldiers that they should go to the court of the Nawab and get gold and silver according to their needs, and the soldiers would reply that they had enough and they had no place for storing their wealth.<sup>26</sup>

The nobles of this period often generously patronized men of letters and scholars. One Husain Ali Khan presented three lakhs of rupees and an elephant with a golden chain to Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil. Abdulah Khan held Mirza Bedil in his esteem. Twice or three times

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25 . On the authority of Mir Allah Bakhsh, a close companion of Husain Ali Khan, Rustam Ali describes the character of the Nawab as follows "he kept vigil day and night, and except for his siesta he very rarely slept. He offered his five prayers in congregation and in two or three *pas* (six or nine hours) read the whole of the Quran. He wore a simple dress and had no liking for gaudy garments. He strictly adhered to *Shariat* and never transgressed it. *Tarikh-i Hindi*, p. 237a; Cf. *Maasir ul Umara*, I, p. 338.

26 . Once Abdullah Khan distributed six lakh of rupees among the poor, following the example of Farrukh siyar, who had ordered him to distribute the same amount on his behalf. *Tarikh-i Hindi*, f. 228a. The author of *Risale-i Muhammad Shah wa Khan-i Dauran* tells us; "Abdullah Khan gave away his extensive state to the deserving and opened his treasury for giving daily allowances to the necessitous... The people enjoyed affluence due to his generosity". *Ibid.*, f. 94a.

Mirza Bedil went to meet him and the former rose from his chair to welcome him. On every occasion, he warmly received him and shook hands with him. Similarly both the Saiyid brothers were much devoted to Ikhlas Khan Wamiq<sup>27</sup> whom they regarded their *murshid*.

Similar was the attitude of Nizam-ul Mulk Asaf Jah. There were several poets and scholars attached to his court. He had also bestowed grants for the dargah of Ajmer. Zulfiqar Khan was famous for his generosity towards poet. It is recorded that once Shaikh Nasir Ali Sarhindi a poet, composed a eulogy for him. Zulfiqar Khan rewarded him with thirty lakh of rupees together with an elephant. Even then he expressed his regret at not being able to reward him adequately for his verses.<sup>28</sup>

Samsam-ud-Din Khan-i-Dauran rewarded a poet called Muhammad Rafi of Kashmir with a thousand rupees. Burhan-ul Mulk Saaat Khan extended patronage to many scholars and literate of his age, so did his son in-law and successor Nawab Wazir Safdar Jung. With a view to demonstrating their devotion to religion and the welfare of the people and exhibiting their power and wealth, the nobles often undertook works of public utility. They constructed, mosques,

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27. Originally a khattari, he was a native of Kalanaur. He was converted to Islam by Maulavi Abdullah, who was an eminent alim and the father of Hakim Sialkoti. He was given the name of Ikhlas Khan.

28. Masirul Umara, II, p. 104.

*madrasas, havelis, palaces, sarais, and tombs of saints.*<sup>29</sup> It is recorded that Amir-ul Umara Husain Ali Khan laid the foundations of a reservoir at Aurangabad which was subsequently enlarged and completed by Iwaz Khan.<sup>30</sup> He also built a *sarai*, a bridge, and other works of public utility in his native Barha.<sup>31</sup> The elegant marble tomb of their mother and mausoleum of Husian Ali Khan at Ajmer reminds people of their contribution in architecture. Qulb-ul Mulk Abdullah Khan constructed a canal in Patparganj, a suburban town in Delhi because there was acute scarcity of water in that area. This canal was connected with the main canal which supplied water to Delhi and was dug during the reign of Shah Jahan.<sup>32</sup> Nawab Muhammad Khan Bangash laid the foundations of several townships at Farukhabad such as Shahpur, Muhammadabad, Khuda Ganj, Darya Ganj, Ali Ganj, Yaqub Ganj, Shamsheer Ganj, and Kashi anj. He founded the town of Farrukhabad in honour of the Emperor Muhammad Farrukhsiyar. Imad ul Daula Qamaruddin Khan, the Wazir of Muhammad Shah, used personally to supervise the construction of his new buildings.

Nizam-ul Mulk Asafjah rebuilt Gosha-i Mahal, the Chahar Mahal, and the Husaini Sagar at Haiderabad. He further rebuilt

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29. For an account of the general interest of the nobles in erecting buildings and laying gardens, see Grose, *A voyage to the East Indies*, I, pp. 137-8.

30. He constructed a mosque at Aurangabad, in Shah Ganj area, *Maasir ul Umara*, II, p. 834; and Khafi Khan, II, p. 942.

31. Khafi Khan, II, pp. 941 and 942.

32. *Maasir ul Umara*, III, p. 140.

Nikamboli, which had been in ruin since the days of Aurangzeb. None of the earlier governors of the Deccan had even thought of repairing it. Nizam-ul Mulk spent considerable sums of money on the repair of old buildings. According to Mohammad Qasim Aurangabadi people used to say that even during the reign of Abul Hasan<sup>33</sup>, buildings like those raised by Nizam-ul Mulk had never been constructed. The city of Aurangabad was practically re-founded by him. He also constructed the ramparts round the city.<sup>34</sup> Ghaziuddin Khan Firoz Jung, a son of Nizamul Mulk Asaf Jah, constructed a mausoleum, a mosque, and a *madrasa* in Delhi.<sup>35</sup> It is this *madrasa* that the Zakir Husain college is functioning today. Sharaf-ud Daula too built a mosque and a *madrasa* at Delhi.<sup>36</sup> Itmad-ud Daula Mohammad Amin had a *madrasa* constructed outside the Ajmeri Gate in Delhi.<sup>37</sup> At Shah-i Mardan the reputed holy foot print of Hazrat Ali is preserved. Nawab Bahadur Jawed Khan had *majlis khana* and a mosque constructed together with a fountain.<sup>38</sup> Many of these nobles were spiritually linked and attached to sufi orders

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33. Abul hasan was a king of Golkunda when Aurangzeb attacked the state and annexed it to his Empire. *Maasir-i Alamgiri*, trans, p. 183.

34. Ahwal Khwaqin, ff. 223b-225b. He founded the city of Burhanpur in 1728-29 and Nizamabad as well. He also built a mosque, a bridge, and a sarai. He built the ramparts round the city of Haiderabad and the canal called Nahr-I Rasul. *Maasirul Umara*, III, p. 882; *Siyarul Mutakhhirin*, III, p. 871.

35. *Asarus Sanadid*, Syed Ahmad Khan, pp. 293-4 and 300-5.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 309.

37. *Tarikh-i-Hindi*, f. 250a.

38. *Asarus Sanadid*, pp. 320-1.

specially of Chishti *silsilah* and wished to be buried in the precinct of famous dargahs at Delhi and outside.

In spite of the fact that the Muslim society had fallen into the whirlpool of wide spread poverty from top to the bottom there was reckless display of wealth and extravagance, waste on the pursuits of pleasure, music and dance and observance of ceremonials from those having amassed wealth by corrupt practices. The insolvency (bankruptcy) of the Central government coffers, and treasuries of the nobles, had brought about general state of unemployment for all types of professional classes who earned their livelihood by attaching themselves to the courts of the kings and the nobles, the loss of peace and tranquility, law and order, which had adversely affected trade and industry, and thereby thrown the craftsmen and artisans out of employment.<sup>39</sup> "The private luxury and vices of the Mussulman princes, observes William Hodges, too frequently reduce them to a state of real poverty, even with large revenues and too often they delegate to artful, designing and avaricious characters, the management and the concerns of the state, and become virtually the plunderers instead of the parents of their subjects. These men, eager after their own private gain, and

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39 . For the insolvency of the state coffers during the reign of Aurangzeb see *Niskha-i Dilkusha*, ff. 84b and 141a. However, for the insolvency of the state Coeffers at the time of Farrukh Siyar's accession (1712-13) see *Farruk Siyar Nama*, ff. 83-84a. For an account of the general state of corruption in the departments of the State, see *Siyarul Mutaakhhirin*, II, pp. 826-34 and 840-42.

knowing well that their conduct will not bear the blaze of day, connive at any villainy that may be acted by those of inferior degree, many of whom are, indeed, their actual agents.<sup>40</sup> Thus it is that the people at large retain no real regard for their governors, and the natural consequence is, that the princes are frequently left, in the hour of distress, quite destitute of support, and an easy prey of any invader”.<sup>41</sup>

Under these circumstances, the rank and file of Indian society in general and the Muslim community in particular, whose livelihood depended mainly on state service and service under the nobles, were the worst sufferers as a consequence of the extravagance of the emperors and the nobles. As such the servants of the state and those attached to the courts of the noble in one way or the other were hard hit.

The trade and industry of the period by and large depended on the patronage of the kings and the nobles, for they were the greatest consumers of the fine goods which the middle class people could not afford to buy. Hence due to the poverty of the kings and nobles, both the arts and artisans were directly affected. For instance, the merchants who brought horses from Isfahan could not find buyers in Northern India and had to go to the Deccan to sell them. The traveling in those days was full

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40 . Ratan Chand, the *diwan* of Saiyid Abdullah Khan, collected wealth by hook and crook for his master causing great distress to the people. Due to general complaint against the Diwan, Farrukh Siyar was compelled to ask Saiyid Abdullah Khan for his dismissal but his order was defied. Khafi Khan II, p. 773; Tarikh-i Farrukh Siyar, p. 24.

41 . William Hodges, *Travels in India*, p. 103.



of danger and involved risk of life and property. In case they sold their horses to any noble, the bargaining was made in such a way as if the horses were stolen property. Even if the price was settled and letter of payment was issued, the *amil* did not pay the amount saying that he had no money to make the payment. On the return from the office of the *amil*, the merchants found both the horses and the money were lost.<sup>42</sup>

The peasants were not free from worries. The vagaries of nature and the fear of draught haunted their minds all the time and so much so there had always been a possibility of their being confiscated due to the non-payment of the land revenues, which caused great insecurity to them.

There were many a poet in this period earning their livelihood by composing poems and by joining the courts of the kings and nobles. On that account they were generally regarded as well off, but infact, as Sauda himself records, they too were hard hit owing to the economic crisis with which the ruling class suffered. Therefore, the poets like other professional classes, had fallen on the thorns of life. The teachers had lost their former respect. The *Maktabas* were deserted as there were few students to be taught. The Masnavi recitors were paid barely two rupees. The preachers imparted lessons to the students in the day and

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42 . Kulliyat-i-Sauda, I, p. 365.

maintained the accounts of someone in the night, as if he was a teacher of mathematics. Besides he had to suffer great insults and hardships from the misbehaviour of the students, who put thorns under the carpet on which the teacher sat.<sup>43</sup>

The calligraphers, who at the heyday of the Mughal rule, were highly paid for their art of calligraphy, had now fallen into the bad days and were compelled by the circumstances to write hundred verses calligraphy in one *paisa*. There was none to appreciate such an art.<sup>44</sup>

The profession of the false *Shaikhship* (saintship) was regarded very lucrative and they passed their lives in affluency, as they received gifts and presents from their disciples and devoted common people. Since the period under study saw the rise of pseudo-saints, therefore this profession, too lost its glamour. The literature of the period is replete with condemnation of those false saints. The poet ridiculed them and compared a saint's turban to a donkey's tail; others compared it to a cupola. The shaikhs had thus fallen on evil days and were at a loss to earn enough even to keep body and soul together.<sup>45</sup> Yet real sufi saints enjoyed respect of emperors nobles, ruling elites and even of common masses. Shah Fakhruddin Delhavi who ushered in a renaissance of

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43 . Ibid., I, p. 366.

44 . Ibid., I, p. 366.

45 . Ibid., I, p. 366.

chistiya order was always held in high esteem by the people and had thousands of *murid* irrespective of caste, colour and creed. He had even allowed his non muslim disciple to recite *wazaif* (*latinies*). Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-Jaban, Khwaja Mir Dard etc. were the other famous sufi saints of the time who earned respect from the people.

Nizam ul Mulk Asaf Jah and his family was closely attached to Shah Fakhruddin Dehlavi, while Abdus Samad Khan, Raushan ud Daula were the followers of Shah Bhik and Shah Miran.

Muslim jurists, theologians and scholars were also watching the political developments with keen interest and wanted to reform the society. Shah Waliullah was one of them who was of the opinion that the Muslim nobility should change their standard of moral and ethical values so that the common man may or should also imitate them.

Thus all the professional classes were literally thrown on the streets. Not only Mir Taqi Mir but almost all the poets of the period have bemoaned neglect of the arts and the artists.<sup>46</sup>

Hard pressed by penury, many famous poets, scholars and men of art of Delhi migrated to the provincial towns in the hope of making sure of two square meals a day. Khan Arzu, Sauda, Mir, Insha, Jurat, Mushafi, Jafar Ali Hasrat and others left Delhi for Lucknow. In his

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46 . Kulliyat-i Mir, p. 167.

autobiography *Zikr-i Mir*, and other verses Mir depicts his own appalling and wretched condition.

In the same way the author of *Risala-I Muhammad Shah-wa Khan-i Dauran*, gives a heart rending account of the thirty six professional classes which were more or less in the same plight as the poets of the period.<sup>47</sup> Unemployment was widespread at all levels of Muslim society. It was the most vital problem which the Muslims of 18<sup>th</sup> century had to face without any hope of immediate remedial steps from the government, which was bankrupt.

Enumerating the main causes of the wretched condition of the masses, Shah Waliullah says that the foremost cause was heavy taxation. Without such taxation the nobles could not have enough money for their extravagances. This taxation broke the backbone of the peasantry, as well as of the artisans and the merchants. Land revenue and octroi duties were the main sources of income for the kings and their nobles. Their ever-mounting expenses and spendthrift ways of life led to exorbitant exactions.<sup>48</sup>

Apart from the general insecurity and virtual paralysis of the administrative machinery, blatant injustice, and victimization, the

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47 . *Risala-i Muhammad shah wa Khan-i Dauran*, ff. 159a-83a.

48 . *Hujjatiullah-ul Baligha*, Urdu Trans I, p. 163.

society of the day was plagued by unprecedented corruption all levels of the bureaucracy. Indeed it affected the economic condition of the masses. Even in the capital city of Delhi, there was much insecurity of life and property; so much so that people could not sleep peacefully during the nights.<sup>49</sup>

Thus one could see the wretched economic condition of the people everywhere in the country in general and in the city of Delhi in particular, having been subject to attacks and massacres at the hands of Nadir Shah, Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Marathas, the Jats, the Sikhs and the Rohillas.

No wonder, when Twining visited the city of Delhi in 1794, he too found it in the grip of destruction and poverty. Wherever he went, he happened to pass through the ruins of old monuments and mausoleums:

“The decline of the empire was visible in the tombs as well as in the palaces of the Emperors”.<sup>50</sup>

The life of the common people in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was by and large replica of the kings and the nobility. As we have already seen both the kings and the peerage of the period wallowed in the mud of debauchery and dissipation. Naturally their influence filtered down and

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49 . For details, see *Kulliyat-I Sauda*, I, pp. 378-71; For an account of the widespread practice of bribery. See, *Siyarul Mutaakhhirin*, II, p. 488.

50 . Twining, *Travels in India*, pp. 242-55.

in the rank and file of Muslim society, even places far off from the capital. The streets of Delhi reflected the life of the court and the nobles. After giving a detached account of the profligate life of the emperor Jahandar Shah, Khafi Khan throws light on the people of the period he remarks:

The unstable and transitory reign of Jahandar Shah strengthened the foundations of cruelty and prevarication. The vocal and instrumental music and the dance of *qawwals*, the *kalawants* and the *dharis* become so popular that it became almost impossible that the *qazi* should turn out to be a distiller of spirit or that the mufti should emerge as drunkard.<sup>51</sup>

The cities and towns of North India in general and Delhi, Faizabad, Lucknow, Najbabd, Murshidabad and Azimabad in particular were dens of vice on the one hand and of piety and religiousness on the other hand. In every city there were large number of *khanqahs* (hospices), *madrasas* and mosques, as also brothels and gambling dens. The pimps were active in every nook and corner. There was a great contradiction in the attitudes of the people in general. They flocked to the *khanqahs* and the shrines with devotion and visited the brothels too

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51. Khafi Khan II, p. 689. Nuruddin corroborates the above statement of Khafi Khan. According to him the *qazis* and officers of lower rank spread the carpet of sensual pleasure deeply engrossed in listening to music and in witnessing dances. The popularity of dance and music was so great that one heard nothing but the songs of dancing girls and noisy brawls of drinkards in every quarter of the city. From the king to the soldiers, from the *faqir* to the *wazir*, everyone was emboldened enough to indulge. Drinking was popular in every section of Muslim society. For the general life of the Muslims of Delhi see, *Muraqqa-i Delhi*.

with enthusiasm. Thus sin and action of religion went side by side, more or less in a balanced way. When the situation became very alarming, Shah Waliullah in sheer disgust wrote to Ahmad Shah Abdali, saying that if the process of sin and iniquity could not be checked immediately and if its course was not channelled in other constructive directions, the Muslims would soon be unstable to differentiate between Islam and *kufir*.<sup>52</sup>

Mirza Muhammad Bakhsh Ashab tells us that during the reign of Muhammad Shah, the emperor and the Wazir. The young and the old, the highest and lowest all became devotees of sensual pleasure. They shunned the hard military life and gave themselves over the ease and comfort after the battle of Hasanpur in 1721. The people too devoted themselves to marry making.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, on the whole the period under review presented horrible picture of moral degeneration. The manifestations of obscenity crossed all reasonable bounds.

A careful study of *Muruqqa-i Delhi* and other contemporary literature would show that the common people of Delhi hankered for a life of sensual pleasure. Opportunities for the pursuit of such pleasures

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52 . *Shah Waliullah Key Siyasi Maktubat*, p. 52.

53 . Munshi KhushLal Chand tells us that the people forgot their duty of obedience's of God. They switched their allegiance to sensual pleasure. *Tarikh-i Muhammad Shahi*, f.6a.

were afforded by the fairs held annually at Hindu temples or at the shrines of Muslim saints.<sup>54</sup>

*Muraqqa-i Delhi* also refers to several examples of the immorality which had crept into Muslim society. It was as if the Muslims of those days had lost their self respect together Dargah Quli Khan gives us an eye witness account of the profligate atmosphere that obtained on the occasion of the *urs* at the shrine of Khuld Manzil.<sup>55</sup>

Kasal Singh, a noble of Muhammad Shah, had founded a whore-house in Delhi known after his name as Kasalpura. The fascinating description of the place as given by Dargah Quli Khan shows how far the whole atmosphere had been vitiated by the luxurious life of the kings and the nobles.<sup>56</sup>

Moreover, as a result of prevailing atmosphere of sensual pleasure, the people had developed a taste and liking for obscenely and obscene literature.

Thus, the permeation of such immoral practices and vices had eaten into the vitals of the physical and moral strength of the Muslim community in general and ruling classes in particular. The nobles who

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54 . Mir Hasan Dehlavi gives a fascinating account of pilgrims on their way to attend the fair and *urs* held at the shrine of Shah Madarat Makanpur. *Masnaviyat-i Mir Hasan*, pp. 137-8.

55 . *Muraqqa-i Delhi*, pp. 17-8.

56 . *Muraqqa-i Delhi*, p. 76.



were the custodians and strength of the Mughal state, were engrossed in sensual pleasure and wasted their physical energies and financial resources in such activities, instead of exerting ceaselessly for the restoration of the past glory of the declining Mughal Empire and countering effectively the rising regional political forces.

## *Chapter 7*

# *Conclusion*

## CHAPTER – 7

### CONCLUSION

A struggle for throne was in the tradition of the Chagtai Turks in India ever since the time of Humayun. Sometime, it was a fratricidal war, sometimes it partook of the nature of a rebellion of a son against the father. Whatever the form, the nobles played an important, sometimes a decisive role in such civil war.

Aurangzeb's death on 3 March 1707 at Ahmadnagar in Deccan signalled the outbreak of a fratricidal war among his three surviving sons, Prince Muazzam, Muhammad Azam and Kam Bakhsh. The eldest brother got the better of the two and defeated and killed Muhammad Azam at Jajau (1707) and Kam Bakhsh (near Hyderabad 1709). Muazzam assumed the title of Bahadur Shah I. An elderly man (over 63 years of age) the new emperor was not fitted for the role of an active leader, "He was the last emperor", writes Sidney Owen, "of whom anything favourable can be said. He was free from some of the worst defects or vices of his successors, whom he did excel in several respect. Unlike all of them he was accustomed to an active camp life. He freely exercised his own discretion in public affairs, selecting his own *Wazir*, a fairly able and experienced man of business and other ministers and governor. He

frequently moved out of Delhi to conduct military campaigns himself, which very few of his successors actually did. Khafi Khan has praised his generosity, good nature and sense of forgiveness. He could not say 'no' to anybody. In fact he was extremely soft by nature. His character was complete contrast to that of his father but it somewhat resembled Dara's.

Whether it was the outcome of statesmanship or weakness, the new emperor favoured a pacific policy. The Maratha Sardar, Shahu who had been in Mughal captivity since 1689 was released and allowed to return to Maharashtra. Peace was made with the Rajput chiefs confirming them in their states. However, Bahadur Shah was forced to take action against the Sikhs whose new leader Banda Bahadur had become a terror for government and the Muslims in the Punjab. Banda was defeated at Lohgarh and the Mughal forces reoccupied Sirhind in January 1711; however the Sikhs were neither conciliated nor crushed.

It was during the reign of Bahadur Shah that the Wazir became the most powerful minister and the most important man in the state. Munim Khan who held the office had great influence over the royal mind and his counsels had more weight with him than that of other ministers. His powers and functions contended beyond the jurisdiction of the revenue department, he took active part in all the campaigns fought in this period.

He overshadowed the Wakil-i-Mutlaq, Asad Khan and drove him into the background.

Though Bahadur Shah gave the impression of being a weak and feeble king, he kept the nobles under restraint and did not allow the reins of government to slip from his grasp. With courage and foresight he successfully resisted the plans of Asad Khan and Zulfiqar Khan to concentrate all executive powers in their own family. Bahadur Shah by utilizing the services of the princes, maintained the dignity and strength of the monarchy and shielded it from encroachment by ambitious ministers.

Preceding chapters throw ample light on the broad policies adopted by Bahadur Shah which seemed to be a gradual departure from the policies of Aurangzeb. This departure was fairly marked in the sphere of the relations with the Marathas and to a smaller extent with the Rajputs. But in the case of the Sikhs, for special reasons, the old policy of repression was pursued with renewed vigour.

A cautious and hesitating departure from Aurangzeb's policies is visible in the sphere of religious policy and in the dealings of the emperor with his Hindu subjects. Thus the ban on drinking and on signing and

dancing in the royal court continued<sup>1</sup>, though Bahadur Shah was far from sharing his father's orthodox outlook. He was a sufi – like his *Wazir*, Munim Khan – and incurred the displeasure of the orthodox circle by assuming the title 'Saiyid',. His attempt to have the word '*Wasi*' or heir inserted in the Friday *Khutbah* after the name of 'Ali' led to widespread rioting and had to be abandoned.<sup>2</sup> However, it led to a definite breach between the Emperor and the orthodox section.

As far as the Bahadur Shah's dealings with the Hindus are concerned, we do not hear of the destruction of any temples or forced conversions in his reign. But the ban on the use of Palkis and Arabi and Iraqi horses, *raths* and elephants by Hindu was reaffirmed, and they were also directed not to wear pearls in their ears, and to trim their beards.<sup>3</sup> He is also said to have issued an order that Hindus were not to be employed as news reporters in the provinces. *Jizyah*, while not formally abolished seems to have fallen gradually into disuse.<sup>4</sup> Thus, distrust of the Hindus, engendered by political conflict and other factors had not yet been given up, but the orthodox approach was being gradually modified. However,

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- 1 . *Bahadur Shah Nama*, 182, 443. According to Manucci (iii, p. 254) Bahadur Shah indulged in wine drinking himself.
  - 2 . *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 603, 661, 681.
  - 3 . *Akhbarat*, 18 Nov. 1707.
  - 4 . It was levied at the time of the first Rajput war (khafi Khan, 606), but according to Warid (p. 9, in the reign of Bahadur Shah, *Jizyah* had fallen into disuse. According to *vir Vinod* (p. 395) towards the close of his reign, Bahadur Shah had contemplated abolishing the *jizyah* but died before he could do so.

*Jizyah* continued to be levied irregularly in different parts of the empire till the end of Bahadur Shah's reign.

Warid merely says that in the reign of Bahadur Shah the orders about *Jizyah* had become old i.e. feeble signifying that they were not enforced strictly.<sup>5</sup>

However, the advantages that might have been secured by the adoption of a more liberal and conciliatory policy were off-set by a deterioration in the sphere of administration and especially of finances. Bahadur shah possessed neither the inclination nor the aptitude for administrative affairs. According to Khafi Khan, 'such negligence was shown in the protection of the state and in the government and management of the country, that witty, sarcastic people found the date of his accession in the words *shah-i-bi-khabr*.<sup>6</sup> However, Bahadur Shah's neglect of administration was partly made good by Munim Khan, the *Wazir* who was a very good man of business; and by Hidayatullah Khan (Sadullah Khan), the *diwan-i-tam* and *Khalisah* who 'in ability and capacity for hard work had no equal in his time'.<sup>7</sup>

Bahadur Shah was most liberal to all, including the *ulama*, in the grant of lands. He allotted half of chakla Bareilly, which was in *Khalisah*,

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5. *Mirat-i-Waridat*, 6.

6. *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 628.

7. *Maasir ul Unmara*, iii, 675, ii, 827.

as *madad-i-maash*. When the *mutasaddis* objected he observed, like Aurangzeb earlier, that the world was wide i.e. large enough. The process of alienation of *Khalisah* lands continued apace under his successors.<sup>8</sup> The *jagir* problem had become progressively more acute till it had reached the proportions of a crisis in the time of Aurangzeb. Bahadur shah on his accession made it worse by a reckless grant of *jagir* and promotions and rewards to all and sundry so much so that according to Bhimsen even clerks secured high *mansabs*.<sup>9</sup> The state of affairs alarmed Ikhlas Khan, the *arz-i-mukarrar* who was noted for his ability and integrity and for the strictness in revenue matter and in the taking of accounts. He represented to the Wazir that the generosity of the king was against prudence and the interests of the state, and that leave alone India, the whole world would not suffice to provide *jagirs* to all those whom be favoured. He suggested that the *Wazir* should institute an enquiry into the suitability of the appointees and whether the proposed rank or promotion or reward was not more than they deserved. But neither Munim Khan or Ikhlas Khan were prepared to face the unpopularity of conducting such an enquiry themselves. Ultimately, Muhammad Saqi Mustad Khan, the historian was entrusted with the job. Before an application was forwarded by the *arz-i-mukarrar* and the *wazir* to the emperor, it had to be checked

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8. *Tarikh-i-Hindi*, 425.

9. *Nuskha-i-Dilkasha*, 167a.



and certified by Mustaid Khan. But this entailed in ordinate delay. The two leading queens, Mihr Parwar and Amatul Habib, some other persons close to the emperor started the practice of securing his signature on their applications without referring them to Mustaid Khan for enquiry and approval. But little heed was often paid to such (irregular) grants (by the revenue department). The king instructed the *mutasaddis* to do what they thought was proper, without heeding his signature which in consequence, lost its value.<sup>10</sup>

We do not know to what extent Munim Khan Ikhlas Khan and Mustaid Khan could place a check upon the reckless grants of Bahadur shah. But the growing crisis of the *jagirdari* system could scarcely be checked by these half-hearted measures. At length, Munim Khan instituted a reform. He passed orders that after a *mansabdar* had been allotted a jagir, the charges for feeding the animals should be deducted from his total emoluments, and the balance paid to him as *tankhwah*.<sup>11</sup>

The reforms undoubtedly constituted a substantial relief to the *mansabdars*, but it increased proportionately the responsibility of the central government keeping in mind the liberality of Bahadur Shah in the matter of granting jagirs, it may be doubted whether he was able to keep

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10. *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 628-30. Cf. Irvine I, 139 for a slightly different version.

11. Literally, 'salary', but this salary could be paid in cash (*naqadi*) or by means of a jagir (*tankhwah jagir*).

in *khalisah* the lands thus deducted from the jagirs of the nobles, and to realize from them the funds for the upkeep of the royal animals. Thus, the burden on the state exchequer probably grew.

In any case, there can be little doubt about the serious financial situation in the time of Bahadur Shah. We are told that when Bahadur Shah ascended the throne, he found 13 crores coined and uncoined gold and silver in the Agra fort. By the end of the reign, all this had been spent! Khafi Khan remarks: "The income of the empire during his reign was insufficient to meet the expenses, and consequently there was great parsimony shown in the government establishments, but specially in the royal household, so much so that money was received everyday from the treasury of Prince Azim-us-shan to keep things going."<sup>12</sup> The artillery men in the royal retinue (*wala shahis*) complained that their salary was six years in arrears.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the reign of Bahadur Shah witnessed a sharp deterioration in the financial situation and a further accentuation of the crisis of the *jagirdari* system, although Munim Khan and a few others sought to check the worst abuses and to prevent a reckless growth in the ranks and numbers of the mansabdars and other grantees.

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12 . *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 683.

13 . *Akhbarat*, 26 Oct. 1711.

However, under him the monarchy faced no crisis; it commanded respect and inspired awe as in the past. With his death on 27 February 1712 at Lahore, however began the long and bitter struggle for the *Wizarat* which became the keynote of Mughal History in subsequent years. His death was immediately followed by a new war of succession among the princes even before his body was buried.<sup>14</sup>

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14 . When the war of succession was over, his dead body was brought to Delhi and buried in the courtyard of the Alamgir mosque near the tomb of Khwaja Qutubuddin Kaki.

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